

Ask your physician or pharmacist if any of the prescription medications you are currently taking can be filled with a generic alternative. Once you begin using generic drugs whenever possible, you can start to reduce prescription drug costs while maintaining the same strength, dosage and quality as the brand-name drug. For more information about generic drugs, go to [theunadvertisedbrand.com](http://theunadvertisedbrand.com).



Nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association



## Top 10 Facts on Generic Drugs



## The Generic Advantage

Did you know that 69 percent of all prescriptions in the U.S. today are filled using generic drugs?<sup>1</sup> More patients and doctors are turning to generic drugs because they can save as much as 80 percent over the cost of brand-name medications. Generic drugs are an option you may want to consider as a way to receive high-quality medication at considerably lower prices. Depending on your prescription drug plan, you may have a lower copayment when you choose generic drugs. And choosing generic drugs can help contain costs, which may in turn help keep monthly premiums and out-of-pocket cost sharing from rising too quickly.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network of Michigan believe you should know all the facts about generic drugs before deciding to try them. Remember to ask your doctor or pharmacist if generics are the right option for you.

### Fact 1

**A generic drug is made with the same active ingredients and is available in the same strength and dosage form as the equivalent brand-name product.**

Generic drugs produce the same effects in the body as brand-name drugs, because both contain identical active ingredients. The difference is in the name. The brand name is the name under which the product is sold and is protected by a patent for up to 20 years. When the patent expires, other manufacturers can produce the generic equivalent of the brand and sell it under its generic name.

### Fact 2

**The manufacturing process of all drugs, including generics, is strictly regulated by the U.S. government and the same standards are met by all manufacturers.**

The Food and Drug Administration requires all drug manufacturers to comply with FDA Good Manufacturing Practices and inspects plants to ensure compliance. If the FDA identifies a manufacturer that does not meet these high standards, they work with the firm to stop production and, if appropriate, recall the product.

### Fact 3

**A generic drug meets the same stringent performance and bioequivalence standards set by the U.S. government as the brand-name drug.**

Each generic drug is laboratory-tested to ensure that the same amount of drug will be absorbed into the bloodstream as with the brand-name drug. Since 1984 no generic drug has been approved in the U.S. unless it has been shown to have the same rate and amount of active drug absorbed as the brand-name drug.



<sup>1</sup> IMS Health, [imshealth.com](http://imshealth.com)

<sup>2</sup> Drug Topics, *Top 200 Generic and Brand Drugs by Units in 2008*, [drugtopics.com](http://drugtopics.com)

<sup>3</sup> Office of the Actuary, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, *Health Spending Projections Through 2018: Recession Effects Add Uncertainty to the Outlook*, Health Affairs 28, no. 2 (2009): w346-w357

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health, United States, 2008, [cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/hus08.pdf](http://cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/hus08.pdf)

## Fact 4

**A generic drug is as safe and provides the same therapeutic effects as the brand-name product for patients of all ages.**

As a group, generic drugs have no proven age-related side effects that are different from brand-name drugs. Generics have been shown to be as safe as brand-name drugs and work no differently in children or the elderly.

## Fact 5

**Many of the generic drugs approved by the FDA are manufactured by companies that also make brand-name drugs.**

Many more generic drugs will become available as brand-name drugs lose their patent protection. More commonly, brand manufacturers are making generic drugs when they lose brand patent protection to compete directly with other generic makers and their branded product.

## Fact 6

**Health care professionals strongly support the use of generic drugs.**

The American Medical Association, the largest organization of medical doctors, states that generic drug products are acceptable for use by the American public. Most hospitals routinely use generic drugs for treatment of their patients.

## Fact 7

**Of the top 10 prescription drugs sold in 2008, nine were generics.**

In fact, the top prescription sold in 2008 was the generic version of Vicodin®.<sup>2</sup>

## Fact 8

**The American public spent \$227 billion on prescription drugs in 2007.<sup>3</sup>**

With the price of generic drugs averaging 30 to 80 percent less than the cost of brand-name drugs, the American public can save billions of dollars by using generic drugs. Overall, these savings can help control the cost of health care in the U.S. without reducing the quality offered to patients.

## Fact 9

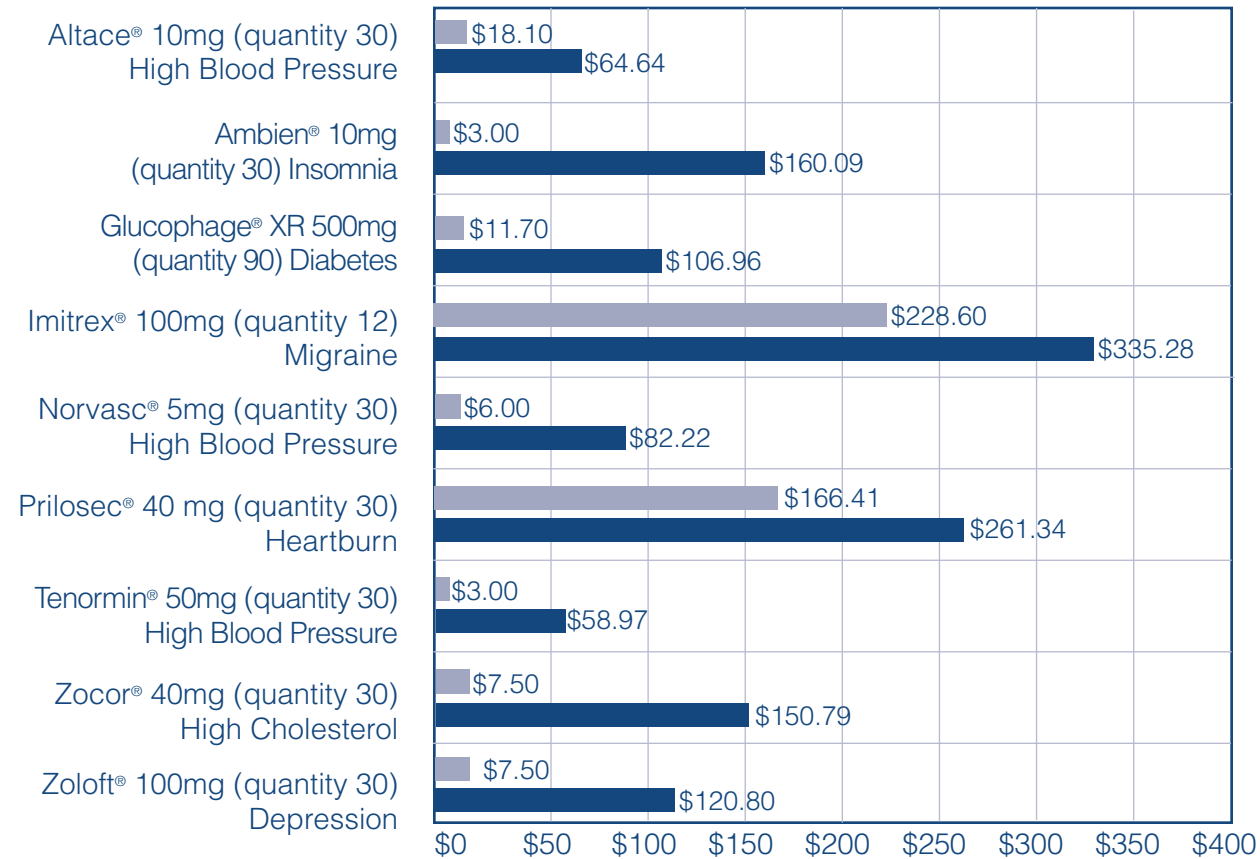
**Everyone can lower their prescription costs with generics, especially people over age 65.**

People over age 65 represent 13 percent of the U.S. population, and they account for 24 percent of the nation's prescription medication used each year.<sup>4</sup> Considerable savings can be gained through the use of generic drugs, which is great news for people over 65 who are the largest users of prescription drugs and often have fixed incomes.

## Fact 10

**The decision to use generic medications is ultimately made through the cooperation of your physician, your pharmacist and you.**

**Brand vs. Generic Drug Pricing**



■ Generic price\*  
■ Brand price\*\*

\* Generic price reflects BCBSM maximum allowable cost as of February 2009

\*\* Brand price reflects average wholesale price as of February 2009

Prices based on 30-day supply