

Healthy Living Newsletter

A MedWatch publication to keep you healthy and informed.

Staying Healthy in Summer



Get the Most from Your Meds Through Medication Management

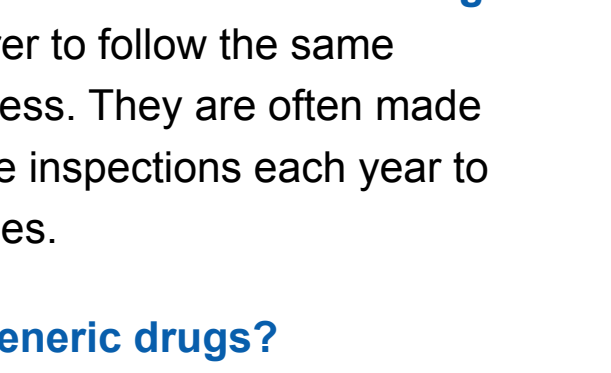
Medicines are intended to help us live longer and healthier lives, but taking medicines the wrong way or mixing certain drugs and supplements can be dangerous. Older adults often have multiple medical conditions and take multiple medications. Safely take, track, and help ensure your medications work most effectively with these tips:

- 1. Take your medication as directed.** Be sure to follow all the instructions for taking your medication. Don't skip or take more of the medicine as this may cause harmful effects. Online medication trackers can help you keep track of the medications you take and their doses.
- 2. Keep your medication organized.** It isn't unusual for many patients to have several different medications, making it difficult to track if and when you took each medication. Learn ways to manage your medication, set reminders, and keep track using available medication tracking tools. You can also use a pill dispenser that helps sort your medication or a weekly pill organizer.
- 3. Take your medicine even if you don't have noticeable symptoms.** When you have the sniffles or a fever, you know you're probably sick. But many conditions don't have symptoms that you can identify without a medical test or blood pressure reading. If you are prescribed medication by your doctor, take as instructed even if you feel fine.
- 4. Continue taking medicine even if symptoms seem to have "gotten better."** People may discontinue their medication once they have improved their cholesterol or blood pressure numbers. However, the medication may be what is making the cholesterol or blood pressure levels go down, and if you stop taking it, your numbers go back up.
- 5. Tell your healthcare professionals and pharmacists about all the medications you are taking.** Drug interactions can change the way a medication works, making it more effective, less effective or worse, combine to create a dangerous mix. Maintain a list of all the medications you're taking, including drug names and dosage. People may discontinue their medication such as cholesterol and blood pressure medication, once their condition has improved. Many people won't mention a drug they take because it's not related to the condition they are experiencing. The prescriber needs to know about all the other drugs you're taking.
- 6. Make sure your healthcare professionals and pharmacists know about other supplements or over-the-counter drugs you may be taking.** Your healthcare providers need to have the whole picture of what you're taking so they can create a plan for the most effective treatment and identify possible interactions. Inform your care team of all the over-the-counter drugs and herbal and/or nutritional supplements you are taking, including the names and dosage.
- 7. Be aware of any food interactions.** Check whether your medication should be taken on a full stomach or an empty one. That could affect how well your body absorbs it. What you eat and drink may also make a big difference. Drinking alcohol, for example, could change how well your liver processes medications.
- 8. Be aware of potential side effects.** Medication routinely comes with detailed information about possible side effects. Familiarize yourself with the major ones and stay vigilant when starting a new medication so you can quickly identify bad reactions.

Medication is only one part of your treatment plan. Taking medication as directed is important, but it's not the only action needed. Lifestyle changes, such as following a healthy diet, are equally as important to your long-term health.

Source: Heart.org

Generic vs. Brand-Name Drugs: What's the Difference?



Did you know that prescription drug prices in the U.S. cost an average of 2.5x more than other Western countries? This might have you wondering if switching to a generic drug is the right move for you. Let's look at the differences between the generic and brand-name versions of prescription drugs to help you decide:

What are generic drugs?

A generic drug is a medication with the exact same active ingredient as the brand-name drug (i.e. calcium carbonate vs. TUMS). Generics are taken the same way as brand-name drugs and offer the same effect. They do not need to contain the same inactive ingredients as the brand-name product, but they can only be sold after the brand-name drug's patent expires.

Is there a difference between generic and brand-name drugs?

There are only two main differences between generic and brand-name drugs:

- The inactive ingredients, such as flavoring or preservatives, may change.
- Generics generally cost less than brand-name versions.

How are generic and brand-name drugs similar?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) sets standards for generic drugs to ensure they work the same way and have the same benefits and risks as their brand-name counterparts. Generic drugs must match the brand-name versions in the following ways:

- They must have the same active ingredients.
- The dosage and strength must be identical.
- The overall quality, stability, and safety must be the same.

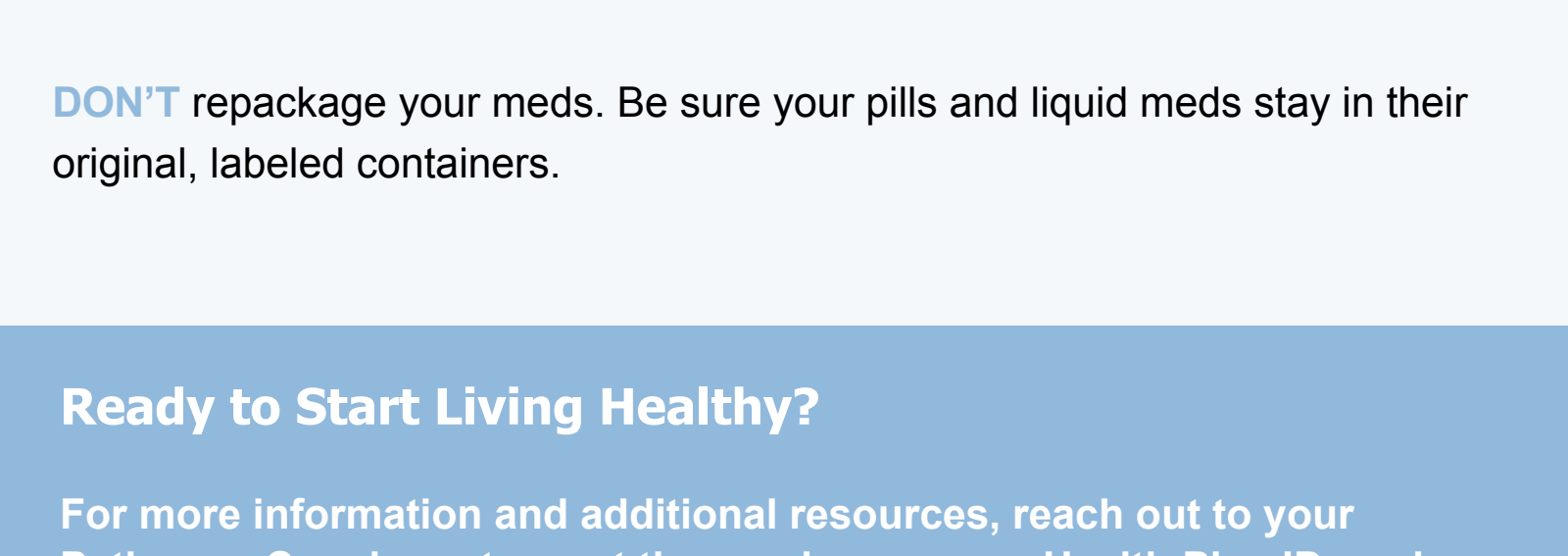
Are generic drugs made with the same standards as brand-name drugs?

Yes. The FDA requires a generic drug manufacturer to follow the same standards as the brand-name manufacturing process. They are often made in the same facilities. The agency conducts on-site inspections each year to make sure the manufacturers are following the rules.

What are the potential cost savings of using generic drugs?

Generic medications on average are 80–85% less expensive than brand-name medications. Always talk to your doctor about the best course of your treatment. Some medicines don't have a generic version, but your doctor or pharmacist can see if there are alternatives you can try. You may find the savings are well worth the change.

Source: WebMD



Medication Dos and Dont's

Medicines are intended to help us live longer and healthier, but taking medicines the wrong way or mixing certain drugs and supplements can be dangerous. Older adults often have multiple medical conditions and may take many medicines, which puts them at additional risk for negative side effects. Here are some dos and don'ts for taking your medicine safely:

DO read everything on the prescription label and any paper handouts that come with the medicine. Follow the instructions carefully.

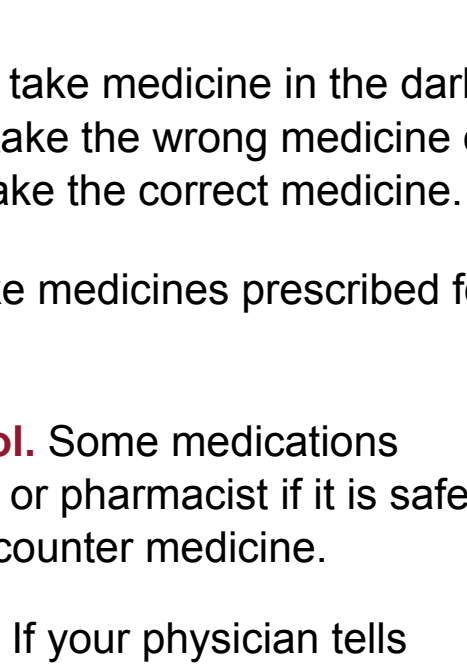
DO keep your medicines out of the reach of children and pets. If you take any prescription pain medicines (for example, morphine or codeine), keep them in a locked cabinet or drawer.

DO take the right dose. Don't take a larger dose of a medicine, thinking it will help you more, and don't skip or take half doses of a prescription drug to save money. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist if you can't afford the medicine.

DO take medicine on time. Some people use meals or bedtime as reminders to take their medicine. You can also use charts, calendars, timers, or smartphone apps to help you remember when and how to take your medications each day.

DO report problems. Call your doctor right away if you have any trouble with your medicines. There may be something else you can take.

DO check the expiration dates on your medication bottles. Discard any unused or expired medicines as soon as possible. Timely disposal of medicines can reduce the risk of others taking them accidentally or misusing the medications on purpose.



DON'T stop taking your medicine abruptly. If you have uncomfortable side effects, write them down so you can report them to your doctor or pharmacist accurately.

DON'T share medicines. Do not take medicines prescribed for another person or give yours to someone else.

DON'T take medicines in the dark. Turn on a light so you don't make a mistake.

DON'T repackage your meds. Be sure your pills and liquid meds stay in their original, labeled containers.

Ready to Start Living Healthy?

For more information and additional resources, reach out to your Pathways Concierge team at the number on your Health Plan ID card.

More Ways to Save Money on Prescription Drugs

Besides switching to a generic, here are a few ways you may be able to cut costs on your prescription medications:

- **Ask for a 90-day supply at your pharmacy:** This may help lower your copay and add up to significant savings.
- **Try mail-order:** Check with your insurance policy to see if you have a lower copayment if you get your prescription through the mail.
- **Pick a pharmacy in your plan's preferred network:** Make sure the pharmacy you visit is in your plan's network before getting a refill.
- **Sign up for a prescription discount program:** These programs work directly with drug manufacturers to help keep costs down for patients.
- **Search for non-profit organizations to help lower costs:** These organizations may help you find assistance programs to lower the cost of your prescription.
- **Pharmaceutical companies can help:** Some companies sponsor assistance programs to help cover prescription costs for low-income individuals or people with disabilities.

Manage Your Medications Safely

Where you store medications and how you take them can have a big impact on their effectiveness and your safety. Ask your physicians and clinicians about possible side effects or medication interactions that you should be aware of. Most importantly, know who to call if you have a bad reaction or taken a prescription differently than prescribed. Here are a few more tips for safely managing your medications:

- **Store medicines in a proper location.** Medication should always be stored safely in a dry, cool place. For this reason, avoid keeping prescriptions in the bathroom.
- **Keep medicine in a childproof place.** If children are around, keep medicine containers out of reach, especially those without childproof caps. Some medicines have bright colors and shapes that children can mistake as candy.
- **Take medicine in a safe environment.** Never take medicine in the dark or when you are tired or distracted. You might take the wrong medicine or too much. Ask for help, if needed, to find and take the correct medicine.
- **Take only your own prescriptions.** Never take medicines prescribed for someone else.
- **Ask your pharmacist before drinking alcohol.** Some medications interact poorly with alcohol. Ask your physician or pharmacist if it is safe to drink while taking any prescription or over-the-counter medicine.

Managing expired or discontinued medications. If your physician tells you to discontinue a medicine, dispose of it immediately. Also dispose of medications that are expired. You could have side effects or a negative interaction if you accidentally take that medication.

Proper disposal of expired or discontinued medication. Some medicines are harmful and could be fatal if accidentally taken by children or anyone else. It is important to always dispose of medications properly. Inquire at your pharmacy about medicine take-back programs in your area. If one is not available, follow disposal instructions on the medicine label or the patient information that accompanies the medicine.

If no instructions are given, crush and mix medicines with coffee grounds, cat litter or food scraps, then seal them in a bag or a container (such as a jar or a margarine tub) and discard them in the regular trash.

Source: PremierHealth.com

What Are Food-Drug Interactions?

Food-drug interactions result from medicines reacting with foods or beverages in the diet. Food-drug reactions can sometimes make the drugs less or more effective. They can also cause serious and dangerous health problems. Here are some various ways in which food and medications can react:

- Food can speed up or slow down the action of the drug.
- Some drugs can change the way the body consumes nutrients.
- Drugs may make you want to eat more food or suppress your appetite.

What are some common food-drug interactions?

- Grapefruit with some medicines used to treat seizures, depression, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and pain.
- Alcohol with some medicines used to treat asthma, bronchitis, emphysema (bronchodilators), high blood pressure, allergies, and pain.
- Caffeine with some medicines used to treat asthma, chronic bronchitis, emphysema (bronchodilators), bacterial and fungal infections (quinolones), depression and anxiety disorders, and to relieve pain and promote healing (histamine blockers).
- Leafy greens and other Vitamin K-rich foods with Coumadin and other blood thinners.

What should you do to reduce your risk?

- Know the facts about your medicines.
- Take medicines with water, not juice.
- Always ask your doctor and pharmacist about any possible food-drug interactions for a new medicine.
- If you experience any unusual symptoms, seek help immediately.
- Keep a list of all the medicines you take.

Thank you for subscribing to MedWatch's Healthy Living newsletter! We hope you enjoyed the content and found it to be a valuable resource.

For more information and additional resources, reach out to your Pathways Concierge team at the number on your Health Plan ID card.