

Pay for the Medicine, not the Name Brand

More than ever before, Americans are using prescription drugs to manage health conditions and prevent medical problems. Effective prescription drugs are helping many of us live healthier, longer lives.

At the same time, the amount we spend on drugs is rising as much as 20% every year. Three major trends are causing the increase in drug spending:

- Price increases for existing drugs.
- Changes in the types of drugs used (with newer, higher-priced drugs replacing older, less-expensive drugs).
- The rising number of prescriptions filled each year.

The growing amount we spend on prescription drugs is one of the main factors driving the cost of healthcare today. We all pay for rising costs in the form of higher premiums, coinsurance and deductibles. Therefore, we all have an interest in keeping healthcare affordable.

A simple thing you can do to save money on prescription drugs is to use generics. Before getting a prescription filled, ask your doctor or pharmacist if a generic equivalent is available. Generic drugs contain the same ingredients as brand drugs, but are not made under a brand name or trademark. The generic drug is just as effective as the name brand. Both medicines have the same active ingredients, the same strength and the same dosage.

On average, the generic drug costs less than half the price of the name-brand drug. One of the main reasons for the cost difference is that generic manufacturers do not bear the cost of research and development, or the cost of advertising the drug. Ask your doctor if there is a generic option that is right for you.

Other things you can do to manage drug costs include:

- Refer to the Preferred Drug List (PDL) for the most cost-effective drugs available through your health plan.
- Use My Pharmacy Managersm on the BlueCross Web site to compare drug costs and find generic options.
- Ask your doctor if there is an over-the-counter drug to treat your condition. They are generally much less expensive than prescription drugs.
- Protect your health by eating a balanced diet and exercising regularly.

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