



## WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER BEFORE SWITCHING?

Certainly the most important point is whether the new medicine will work as well for your health as the medicine you are currently taking.

Not every medicine works the same way in every person, even people in the same family with the same condition may have different results. For example, some people have side effects with a specific medicine, while others, with exactly the same condition taking the exact same medicine, do not. A medicine may work perfectly for one person and not work well at all for someone else. When a new generic becomes available, it is important to find out if this new medicine is a generic of the exact medicine you are taking or a generic version of a similar medicine. That may make a real difference in how well it will work for you.

Research has demonstrated that there are many factors that affect the body's ability to absorb and use medicines. Other medicines you are taking, ethnic differences, diet, age and many other factors can play important roles as well. You and your doctor should discuss these factors when making a decision about switching.

Keep in mind that even though generic medicines are made from the same active ingredients as their brand-name counterparts, the other ingredients that are used for color, shape, texture, etc., may be different. In some cases, these differences affect a person's ability to benefit from the generic version of a medicine. This may be particularly true for some types of conditions.



## WHAT SHOULD I DO AFTER SWITCHING?

If you and your doctor have made the decision to switch a medicine, it is important that you schedule regular follow up visits to make certain that it is working well. Don't assume that any new medicine will work the same way your old one did, even if it is a generic version of your original medicine.

You should always call your doctor immediately if you have any side effects or changes in your health.

### Summary

1. Always talk to your doctor before switching any medicine.
2. Remember that many factors affect your body's ability to benefit from a specific medicine. Discuss this with your doctor whenever you are getting a new prescription of any kind.
3. Keep in mind that similar medicines may work differently in your body. Pay close attention to any reaction whenever you are taking a new medicine and notify your doctor immediately if you have side effects or changes in your health.
4. If you and your doctor decide to switch medicines, be sure to follow up regularly to make sure your new medicine is working for you.

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## Does A Really Equal B?

What You Should Know About Switching (therapeutic and generic substitution)





## WHAT IS SWITCHING?

Switching means replacing one medicine you are taking with another that is similar. Generic switching is when you substitute a generic medicine for the same brand name prescription medicine. Therapeutic switching refers to replacing one brand name prescription to another different brand medicine which is similar (but not identical).

## WHY DOES SWITCHING OCCUR?

Cost is one of the most common reasons for switching. Insurance companies and government programs negotiate with wholesalers for the prices of all of the generic and brand name medicines included in their list of covered medicines.

When an insurer can get a specific medicine at a cost that is lower than other similar drugs, that medicine is usually placed on the plan's preferred list. It is very important to understand, however, that a medicine on a preferred list does not mean it has been found to be more effective or better than other similar medicines. It means that the insurance company prefers that your doctor prescribe the medicine because it will cost your insurer less to provide it.

You may receive a notice from your insurance company pointing out that a generic version of your medicine is available or that your medicine is not on their preferred list but that a similar one is on the list. The notice will probably ask that you talk to your doctor about switching.

Perhaps you have taken a prescription to your drug store to be filled and the pharmacist has asked you if you wish to switch to a generic version of your medicine or a similar medicine that may cost less than your current prescription. That is a form of switching as well and impacts how much the pharmacist is paid to fill your prescription.

Finally, your doctor may tell you that a generic version of your medicine is available and ask if you would like to switch.

