



**There are many brand and generic medications now on the market for epilepsy and your pharmacist may offer you the generic medication. This guide explains the differences between them and whether it's safe to switch.**

### What are brand and generic medications?

A generic product is similar to the original brand. But even though specific guidelines and tests are conducted to ensure the generic medications are the same, a slight degree of variation is allowed. Generics also have a different name, different packaging, different tablets and are often slightly cheaper.

### It is a problem if I switch brands?

Studies have shown that even small differences in medication can cause problems for people with epilepsy. Switching from one brand to another may cause problems with your epilepsy including:

- ❖ **More seizures**
- ❖ **More severe seizures**
- ❖ **Seizures after a long period of remission**
- ❖ **More side-effects**
- ❖ **Different side-effects**

With most types of medications, switching brands may not make any difference. *But with medications for epilepsy, we know it can make a difference.*

It appears that it is the change in epilepsy medication, whether it is from a brand to generic, generic to a brand, or generic to generic, which causes the problems, not specific medications.

This is thought to happen because in the case of antiepileptic drugs, there is a fine line between the drug not working, the drug working well and the drug being toxic. The slightest change in dose can make all the difference, and switching your brand of epilepsy medication may be what causes a change in dose.

### What should I do?

- 1 If it works, don't switch**  
If your seizures are controlled with the medication you are currently taking, DO NOT change this type of medication without discussing it with your neurologist or prescribing doctor – even if the pharmacist says it's okay to do so. Always take the medication that was originally prescribed.
- 2 Take note of your brand**  
Keep a written record of your usual medication. Take it to the chemist when getting your script filled, or take the empty packet with you.
- 3 Check the box**  
There is a box on your prescription that the doctor can tick to ensure you do not get any other version of your medication. If the doctor has ticked this box, point it out to the pharmacist.
- 4 Check the packet**  
Check the packaging and brand name against what you usually use before you leave the chemist. If it doesn't match, ask the pharmacist to change it.

**If the brand works, don't switch!**

### **5 Consider the real cost**

If your pharmacist suggests that switching to another brand or 'generic' can save you money, consider if the small money saving is worth the cost of more problems with your epilepsy. Feel free to politely refuse and insist on your usual medication.

### **6 Educate**

Let the pharmacist know about problems that can occur if you switch brands.

### **7 Follow doctor's advice**

Never switch a brand of medication you have been prescribed without speaking to your neurologist or prescribing doctor.

This information is given to provide accurate, general information about epilepsy. Medical information and knowledge changes rapidly and you should consult your doctor for more detailed information. This is not medical advice and you should not make any medication or treatment changes without consulting your doctor.