

# Branded versus Generic Oral Contraceptives



Companies take out exclusive rights called patents on each new medicine they discover. If a company has a patent on a medicine, only that company can market it under their brand name once it's been granted a licence. When the patent for the branded version of a medicine expires, other companies are allowed to manufacture tablets containing the medicine. When this happens, the products made by these other companies are called 'generics'. Generic medicines are copies of the branded medicine that have exactly the same strength and dosage, route of administration, intended use, therapeutic effect, side effects and safety profile, as the original medicine so they work in exactly the same way as their branded equivalents.

In the UK there are now a number of generic versions of branded oral contraceptive tablets available and it is common practice within the NHS that when generic versions of a medicine become available, these are prescribed instead of the branded version of the medicine. These generic medicines are subject to the same rigorous scrutiny by the regulatory system as branded medicines to ensure that they are of the same high quality, and are as safe and as effective.

### **Why am I being switched to the generic version of my oral contraceptive?**

Generic versions of medicines typically cost the NHS significantly less than the branded version. This is because the manufacturers have not had the expenses of developing and marketing a new medicine. By switching from the branded to the generic tablets you are helping your clinic and the NHS save money, enabling you to receive the same high quality of care whilst we look after a growing number of patients.

### **What are the main changes I will notice?**

Branded medicines have two different names; the brand name created by the pharmaceutical company that made the medicine and which may be more familiar to you, and the generic name, which is the name of the active ingredient in the medicine. The brand name is usually written most clearly on the packaging of branded medicines. However, you will always see the generic name written somewhere on the packaging (often in small print). On switching from the branded version of the medicine to the generic version, the medicine will only be referred to by its generic name.



The generic oral contraceptive tablets may also be a slightly different colour, shape and/or size and may have different markings compared to the branded tablets and the outer packaging containing the tablets will look different.

### **Will the generic oral contraceptive tablets work in the same way as the branded tablets?**

Yes. Both the branded and generic tablets contain the same active medicine(s) in the same dose(s), ensuring that they will have the same medicinal effect. They are subject to the same strict quality control tests by the regulatory authorities to ensure that they are as safe and effective as their branded equivalent. So, as long as you continue to take the generic tablets in the same way as the branded tablets and as you have been directed to do, then they will work in the same way.

### **Will there be any side effects when I switch?**

You shouldn't expect any new side effects when you start taking the generic oral contraceptive tablets as they contain the same drugs in the same doses as the branded tablets. However, the tablets may contain some different inactive ingredients, such as colourings. If you think that you may be allergic/sensitive to any of the ingredients in the generic tablets, please let your doctor, pharmacist or specialist nurse know before you start to take them. Please also speak to them should you experience any new side effects once you have started the generic tablets.

### **How do I switch to the generic oral contraceptive tablets?**

Once you have used up your current supply of branded tablets you should switch to the generic tablets at your next scheduled dose. You should avoid taking both the branded and generic tablets together as this would lead to taking a double dose.

### **How do I take the generic oral contraceptive tablets?**

The generic oral contraceptive tablets should be taken in the same way as the branded tablets. They can be taken with or without food and should be taken at the same time of day that you were taking the branded tablets.



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