

Epilepsy and Seizure Disorders:

Understanding Medication Substitutions

"Generic okay?" Have you ever heard this question when filling your prescription at the pharmacy? Many answer, "Sure." However, they may not understand the question. "Generic" and "Brand-Name" epilepsy medications are not always the same. Research shows small changes in epilepsy medicine may cause seizures for people with epilepsy or seizure disorders. This fact sheet may answer some of your questions about generic and brand-name epilepsy medicine. For more information, visit the website below.

What is the difference between generic and brand name medicine?

Generic and brand name medicine should have the same active ingredient and dose. However, they vary in shape, size, color and inactive ingredients. This is considered appropriate by the FDA. Thus, the two medicines may have different effects on your child.

What is medication substitution?

Medication substitution occurs when medicine is switched from brand name to generic, generic to brand, or generic-to-generic. Some brand name medicines do not have a generic form so if you switch you child's medicine to generic he/she may get a different drug.

Why is substitution a problem for epilepsy medicines?

Research shows that small changes in epilepsy medicine may cause seizures. A small difference in brand name and generic epilepsy medicine may cause life threatening toxicity or unexpected seizures.

Do I need to speak to my child's doctor first before switching?

Yes. Talk to your doctor before switching your child's epilepsy medicine. If your child's medicine changes, the doctor may need to check your child's blood levels, adjust the dose, and watch for side effects.

Can I refuse the switch?

Yes! Your child's medicine cannot be switched without your approval and may require your child's doctor to change the prescription. If you choose to switch to generic epilepsy medicine, read the label of the medicine bottle. Compare the label to the doctor's prescription to ensure your child's medicine is correct. Make sure your generic epilepsy medicine is from the same pharmaceutical company every time you refill your prescription.

How can I prevent medication substitution?

Compare the label of the medicine bottle to the doctor's prescription. If the label and the prescription do not match, ask the pharmacist to check the prescription again and give you the medicine your child's doctor prescribed. To download a letter for your pharmacist, please visit: www.nomoreseizures.org/pdfs/pharma_letter.pdf

What's the bottom line?

Research shows small changes in epilepsy medicine may cause seizures.

- ✓ Generic medicines are not bad. Brand name medicines are not bad. Switching is the problem!
- ✓ Your child's medicine cannot be switched without your approval.
- ✓ Before you agree to the switch, talk to your child's doctor.
- ✓ Monitor the medicine your child receives to prevent medication switching or mistakes.

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