

**"Same bloke.**

**Different hat."**



## Generic medicines are an equal choice

**They contain the same active ingredient**

National Awareness Campaign Newsletter

No 3, October 2008 | [www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au)

'The Australian Medical Association (AMA) supports the NPS *Generic medicines are an equal choice* campaign and encourages doctors to discuss generic medicines options with their patients.'

**Associate Professor John Gullotta AM, GP and Chair, Federal AMA Therapeutics Committee.**

This campaign is endorsed by:



### Generic medicines on air

National Prescribing Service (NPS) is continuing the *Generic medicines are an equal choice* campaign in 2008. Commencing with two weeks of TV commercials in July, new commercials will screen in late October to build consumer awareness about the active ingredient in medicines.

Again, NPS encourages consumers to speak to their doctor or pharmacist, call Medicines Line or go to [www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au) for more information.

### What is a generic medicine?

The pharmaceutical company that first develops a medicine takes out a patent to ensure its exclusive right to produce and market it. After the patent for the original medicine expires, other manufacturers can produce the medicine with the same active ingredient. These are called generic medicines.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) applies the same standards to generic medicines as applied to original brands, ensuring efficacy and quality of all medicines. For a generic brand to be placed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) it must be interchangeable with the original brand and proven to be bioequivalent. This means that the rate and extent of absorption of both products are so similar that they can be expected to have the same therapeutic effect.<sup>1</sup>

### Why focus on the active ingredient?

The 2008 campaign focuses on the consumer getting to know the active ingredient, the

chemical responsible for the medicine's therapeutic effect, that is, the chemical that makes the medicine work.

Consumers are advised that generic medicines contain the same active ingredient as the original brand medicine. By being familiar with the active ingredient name, consumers are reassured that the medicine they are taking contains the active ingredient their doctor prescribed. From this consumers can make informed decisions and reduce the risk of potential confusion and medicine misadventure.

### What are inactive ingredients?

Medicines also contain inactive ingredients which may vary from brand to brand. Generally, different inactive ingredients do not affect how the medicine works. A few consumers may be allergic to an inactive ingredient — such as gluten, lactose or preservatives — and should check with their doctor or pharmacist before switching to a different brand.

### The 2007 generic medicines campaign

- An NPS survey of the 2007 campaign found over 90% of consumer respondents were aware of generic medicines. Further, 75% of seniors with a chronic condition reported they would be confident in making a choice to use generic medicines if provided the option by a health professional.<sup>2</sup>
- A survey after the 2007 campaign demonstrated a 38% increase in consumer awareness of the generic medicines campaign. More than 600,000 resources were ordered.

#### Message from health professionals and consumers:

'If you are considering switching to a generic medicine, speak with your doctor and your pharmacist. Ask about the active ingredient and for the CMI leaflet so you can be assured that you and your health professional are making the most appropriate choices for you.'

Pictured left to right: Dr Parisa Aslani, community pharmacist; Dr Guan Yeo, general practitioner; Christine Walker, consumer representative.



- Stakeholder involvement contributed to the successful delivery of the *Get to know your medicines* and *Generic medicines are an equal choice* campaigns. They won a 2008 IABC Gold Quill Award for Excellence in Communication Management — Multi-Audience. This is international recognition of the quality of the collaborative effort and the impact of the campaigns.

1 McLachlan AJ, Ramzan I and Milne RW. Frequently asked questions about generic medicines. *Australian Prescriber* 2007; 30:41-43.

2 Evaluation of the 2007 NPS National Awareness Campaign: Findings from community surveys and NPS resource utilisation data. National Prescribing Service, 2007.



National Prescribing Service Limited

NPS is an independent, non-profit organisation for Quality Use of Medicines funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.  
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## Medicines information line for consumers



### FAQs for consumers

#### How do I find the active ingredient name?

By knowing the active ingredient, you are reassured your medicine is what your doctor prescribed. Speak with your doctor or pharmacist to find out how to identify the active ingredient on your medicine packaging or label — it's not always in the same place. Ask your pharmacist for a Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflet to find out more about your medicines and how to use them safely and effectively. Read the NPS fact sheet, 'Know the active ingredient' and find out more information at [www.nps.org.au/genericmedicines](http://www.nps.org.au/genericmedicines).

#### Brand medicine or generic medicine: which for me?

*Generic medicines are an equal choice.* They contain the same active ingredient as the original brand of medicine.

However, all medicines — whether brand or generic — have risks as well as benefits. With a small number of medicines ('critical dose medicines') you should avoid switching between medicine brands — for example, if you are using digoxin, which has a generic alternative, or if you are using one of the two brands of warfarin (which does not have a generic alternative).

It is important to know about the medicines you are taking and discuss your options with your doctor or pharmacist.

#### How do I get to know my medicines better?

Keep a list of medicines you are taking and discuss your medicines with your doctor or pharmacist.

If you, or someone you care for is being treated in hospital, or you visit a doctor or pharmacist that you don't usually go to, you may be prescribed or dispensed a different brand of medicine. Check the active ingredient and strength on the label to make sure you are taking the correct medicine and to avoid accidentally taking a double dose.

NPS encourages people taking medicines to look at the NPS range of fact sheets, to help you *get to know your medicines* and be aware of potential issues. Speak to your doctor, pharmacist, hospital pharmacist, or call Medicines Line to learn more about generic medicines. You can also visit [www.nps.org.au/genericmedicines](http://www.nps.org.au/genericmedicines).

Remember:

- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist.
- If you are in hospital or residential care, ask to speak to your doctor or pharmacist.
- Subscribe to *MedicinesTalk*, a free quarterly newsletter written by consumers for consumers.
- For more information call NPS Medicines Line on 1300 888 763, order fact sheets and other resources (see over page) or visit [www.nps.org.au/genericmedicines](http://www.nps.org.au/genericmedicines).

## Medicines information line for health professionals



### FAQs for health professionals

#### What is NPS saying to consumers about the active ingredient?

The active ingredient is the chemical in the medicine responsible for its therapeutic effect.

#### What is NPS saying to consumers about generic medicines?

*Generic medicines are an equal choice.* They contain the same active ingredient as the original brand of medicine. On the PBS, different brands containing the same active ingredient are interchangeable only if proven to be bioequivalent.

For more information about generic medicines see:

- Generic medicines: dealing with multiple brands. NPS News 55, 2007.
- Frequently asked questions about generic medicines. Australian Prescriber 2007; 30:41–43.
- Generic medicines: same difference? NPS News 44, 2006.
- Generics — equal or not? Australian Prescriber 2003; 26:85–87.

#### What does NPS ask doctors and pharmacists to do?

- Encourage your patients to be familiar with their medicine's active ingredient.
- For pharmacists, point out or highlight the active ingredient on the label or medicine packaging when dispensing medicine for the patient.
- When prescribing and dispensing medicines, where safe and appropriate, discuss generic medicine options with your patients.
- Brand substitution, where appropriate, should be discussed and agreed with the patient.
- Consider your patient's needs, for example, whether brand switching may cause confusion.
- When dispensing prescription repeats, where possible, offer the patient the same brand.

#### Does NPS provide education modules about generic medicines?

Yes, NPS provides education for pharmacy staff and consumers.

In collaboration with the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, NPS developed an education module for pharmacy assistants in community pharmacies. This helps them answer enquiries about generic medicines.

NPS and the Council on the Ageing (COTA) organisations have collaboratively developed a generic medicines training module as part of the peer education program for consumers aged over 50. The module has information about active ingredients and the strict government standards required for all medicines in Australia. The module encourages consumers to talk with their doctor or pharmacist about generic medicines.

NPS acknowledges the valuable contribution of the following program partners in the development of generic medicines resources:



The Pharmacy  
Guild of Australia

Pharmaceutical  
Society of Australia

shpa  
The Society of Hospital  
Pharmacists of Australia



**Quality Use of Medicines (QUM)** is selecting management options wisely, choosing suitable medicines if a medicine is considered necessary and using medicines safely and effectively.

See back page to order

**Resources – orders within Australia are free!**



**GET TO KNOW YOUR MEDICINES FACT SHEETS (A4)**

- **Know the active ingredient** (NEW — Available to order or download at [www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au) from 27 October 2008).
- Generic medicines.
- New medicines – are they always better?
- Read the label. It's important.
- Talking with your doctor or pharmacist.
- Remembering your medicines.
- Using the internet to find reliable health information.
- What is a medicine?



**CONSUMER MEDICINE INFORMATION (CMI) GUIDE (A4)**

NPS provides a guide to how to use the CMI about each medicine. A CMI is produced by the pharmaceutical company that makes the particular medicine. They may be included in the medicine package, but can always be requested from the pharmacist or doctor, or are available at [www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au). The guide to CMIs shows how to find the important facts to know before, during and after taking the medicine.



**MEDIMATE BROCHURES (DL)**

*Medimate* brochures help consumers understand and use medicines in partnership with their doctor, pharmacist, nurse and other health professionals.

- Available in:**
- English
  - Chinese and English
  - Greek and English
  - Italian and English
  - Vietnamese and English



**MEDICINES LIST AND WALLET**

*Medicines List* enables consumers to carry a list of medicines wherever they go. The list folds neatly into a clear plastic wallet.

- Available in:**
- English
  - Simplified Chinese and English
  - Traditional Chinese and English
  - Greek and English
  - Italian and English
  - Vietnamese and English



**QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR MEDICINES**

*Questions to ask about your medicines* is a useful tool to help consumers talk to their doctor or pharmacist about their medicines. The list folds neatly to fit into the *Medicines List* plastic wallet.

- Available in:**
- Simplified Chinese and English
  - Traditional Chinese and English
  - Italian and English

**NPS can also supply these brochures from the following organisations:**



**RUM Program:**

**RETURN YOUR UNWANTED MEDICINES (RUM) BROCHURE (DL)**

**The Pharmacy Guild of Australia:**

**HOME MEDICINES REVIEW BROCHURE (DL)**



**GET TO KNOW YOUR MEDICINES FREE INFORMATION SESSION BROCHURE (DL)**

NPS has developed a generic medicines community information sessions module, which is presented by COTA (Council on the Ageing) peer educators free of charge. The sessions are available to seniors (anyone over 50) groups, clubs and individuals. To book sessions contact COTA state and territory organisations and the Seniors Peer Education Centre in NSW. See the brochure for more details.



**MEDICINES LINE FRIDGE MAGNET ON CARD (DL)**

Consumers can call Medicines Line to speak to a pharmacist about their prescription, over-the-counter and complementary medicines. Medicines Line provides independent, accurate and up-to-date information for the cost of a local call.



**AME LINE FRIDGE MAGNET ON CARD (DL)**

AME Line provides consumers with an avenue for reporting and discussing adverse experiences with medicines. AME Line provides independent, accurate and evidence-based information for the cost of a local call.



**MEDICINESTALK NEWSLETTER (A4)**

*MedicinesTalk* is a quarterly newsletter produced by consumers for consumers. Subscription is absolutely free and issues are posted directly to consumers.



**GET TO KNOW YOUR MEDICINES KIT (CD-ROM)**

The *Get to know your medicines* CD kit has everything you need to plan and host a successful event in your community about the quality use of medicines.

# Fax order form

Fax this form to 02 9283 2028

Online orders are quicker! [www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au)  
or email [info@nps.org.au](mailto:info@nps.org.au)

Materials	Quantity	Fact Sheets (A4)	Quantity
<b>Medimate</b> (English)	<input type="text"/>	<b>Generic medicines</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Medimate</b> (Chinese + English)	<input type="text"/>	<b>New medicines – are they always better?</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Medimate</b> (Greek + English)	<input type="text"/>	<b>Read the label. It's important</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Medimate</b> (Italian + English)	<input type="text"/>	<b>Talking with your doctor or pharmacist</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Medimate</b> (Vietnamese + English)	<input type="text"/>	<b>Remembering your medicines</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Medicines List</b> (English)	<input type="text"/>	<b>Using the internet to find reliable health information</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Medicines List</b> (Simplified Chinese + English)	<input type="text"/>	<b>What is a medicine?</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Medicines List</b> (Traditional Chinese + English)	<input type="text"/>	<b>Consumer Medicine Information</b> (A4-guide)	<input type="text"/>
<b>Medicines List</b> (Greek + English)	<input type="text"/>	<b>Home Medicines Review</b> (DL-brochure)	<input type="text"/>
<b>Medicines List</b> (Italian + English)	<input type="text"/>	<b>Return Your Unwanted Medicines</b> (DL-brochure)	<input type="text"/>
<b>Medicines List</b> (Vietnamese + English)	<input type="text"/>	<b>Get to know your medicines information session</b> (DL-brochure)	<input type="text"/>
<b>Questions to ask about your medicines</b> (Simplified Chinese + English)	<input type="text"/>	<b>Get to know your medicines kit</b> (CD-ROM)	<input type="text"/>
<b>Questions to ask about your medicines</b> (Traditional Chinese + English)	<input type="text"/>	<b>Medicines Line</b> (fridge magnet with DL-card)	<input type="text"/>
<b>Questions to ask about your medicines</b> (Italian + English)	<input type="text"/>	<b>AME Line</b> (fridge magnet with DL-card)	<input type="text"/>
<b>MedicinesTalk</b> quarterly newsletter subscription			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I would like to subscribe		Indicate number of copies for each issue	<input type="text"/>
<b>NEW FACT SHEET – Know the active ingredient</b>			
Available to order or download at <a href="http://www.nps.org.au">www.nps.org.au</a> from 27 October 2008.			
Please email <a href="mailto:info@nps.org.au">info@nps.org.au</a> with your name and email address to be notified when the fact sheet is available.			

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