

No co-pays for generic cholesterol drugs

Effective January 2010, members and retirees with prescriptions for cholesterol-lowering drugs known as statins won't be charged co-pays for the generic versions of their medications. "This new zero co-pay program will help the union's prescription drug program save money while it cuts members' costs during these difficult economic times," said Cynthia Chin-Marshall, Administrator of the DC 37 Health & Security Plan.



“Generics are a safe alternative to brand name drugs, but you need to discuss any change with your physician.” For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009, the Plan handled almost 200,000 claims for statins, which make up the greatest portion of the \$165.7 million the Plan spends on prescription drugs each year. Lipitor is the Plan's most frequently used medication and one of the most expensive.

Brand name statins cost the Plan an average of \$159.70 per prescription, while generics cost only \$2.39 per prescription. The Plan paid \$17.3 million in claims for the brand name statin drugs, but under \$179,000 for generic statins. Generics are available for frequently prescribed statins, such as Mevacor (generic: lovastatin), Pravachol (pravastatin) and Zocor (simvastatin). After Lipitor's patent runs out in 2011, the drug manufacturer Pfizer will be allowed to sell a generic version for six months until competitors can bring less expensive versions to the market.

DC 37's Prescription Drug Plan encourages participants to use generic drugs by offering a three-tier co-payment structure. Participants pay \$5 for a month's supply of generics, \$15 for brand name drugs on a list of preferred medications and \$35 for nonpreferred brand name drugs.

While some unions and employers have mandatory generic plans requiring employees to pay 100 percent for brand name drugs that have generic equivalents, participants in the DC 37 Plan pay the \$35 co-pay and pay the difference between the ingredient cost of the brand name drug and the generic. Consumers have become more willing to use generics as the Federal Government and drug plans have done a better job of educating people about their safety and effectiveness.

Affordability provides a big incentive to use generics, because they typically cost only one-third as much as brand name drugs. The strength and active ingredients of generics match the brand name versions, and the Federal Food and Drug Administration tests generics before they are sold.

Cost of Anti-Cholesterol Medications (30-day supply)		
	Cost to plan	Cost to member
		New co-pay for statins Jan. 1, 2010
Generic	\$2.39	\$0
Brand	\$159.70	\$15/35 (more if generic is available)

Source: DC 37 Health & Security Plan

Statins & You

If you have to take a cholesterol lowering drug, talk to your doctor about using a generic if it is available. Some of the popular brand name cholesterol lowering drugs have generic counterparts. Generics have the same strength and active ingredients as the brand.

BRAND

Mevacor
Pravachol
Zocor

GENERIC EQUIVALENT

Lovastatin
Pravastatin
Simvastatin

2 GOOD REASONS TO CHOOSE A GENERIC!!

The US Food & Drug
Administration says...

Generic drugs are safe
and effective

DC 37 Health &
Security Plan says...

There is \$0 copay for
generic statins

In these tough economic times, every bit helps.
Every penny counts.

GO GENERIC.
Generic drugs: Safe; Effective. FDA approved.

For more information, call 1-888-INFO-FDA
Or visit www.fda.gov