

There is a range of disease modifying therapies approved for people with MS in Australia. These therapies, also called immunotherapies, work to reduce disease activity in the central nervous system and reduce the frequency and severity of relapses in people with MS.

The MS therapy landscape is continuously evolving and it is likely that generic disease-modifying therapies will become available to treat MS.

What is a generic medicine?

A generic medicine is defined by Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) as "an additional brand of an existing medicine. It contains the same active ingredient (the chemical that makes the medicine work) as the existing medicine."¹

Apart from containing the same active ingredient, generic brands also have to be 'bioequivalent'. That is, if you take the same dose of a generic medicine as an existing medicine, the same amount of active ingredient is absorbed by your body over the same period of time.

In other words, a generic medicine works in the same way and provides the same clinical benefit as its brand-name version. You can take a generic medicine as an equal substitute for its brand-name counterpart.

When does a generic medicine become available?

A generic medication can become available when a brand-name medication's patent protections have expired. The original brand product has a finite patent life, at the end of which other manufacturers can apply for a licence to manufacture and market a generic version.

Is a generic medicine as safe as possible?

Generic prescription medicines must meet the same standards of quality, safety and effectiveness as the original brand. As with all medicines, the TGA continually monitors safety once they are on the market.

Is there a difference in cost?

For MS medications, if the medicinal product (medicine) is listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), the cost to someone living with MS for the generic brand medicine, is likely to be the same as the original brand name version.

Do I have to accept a generic medicine if it is offered?

No, the choice is yours whether you are happy to go with the generic or if you'd prefer to stick with the original. Ask your neurologist or MS Nurse if you have any questions or concerns about switching between brands of medicine.

There may be times when your neurologist or MS Nurse recommends you stick with one particular brand. For example, some pharmaceutical companies offer a patient support program or services (e.g. blood tests) that may not be available if you choose the generic brand.

¹ Australian Government, Department of Health, Therapeutic Goods Administration Fact Sheet <https://www.tga.gov.au/community-ga/generic-prescription-medicines-fact-sheet>

Generic medications for MS (contd)

Also, the medicine itself and its packaging may look different, so it is important that you avoid confusion and make an informed choice about taking different brands.

Teriflunomide (Aubagio)

From 1 June 2019, another brand of teriflunomide (brand name Aubagio) may become available. When you attend your pharmacy to collect your prescription for teriflunomide (Aubagio), you may be offered a generic brand of this medicine.

You should make an informed choice about whether or not to accept the generic brand, which may or may not be raised at the time of dispensing. It is important to clarify your preference directly to the pharmacist.

An important consideration is that Sanofi Genzyme's *MS One to One* pharmaceutical patient support program will only be available if you continue to take Aubagio. If you choose to take a generic brand, you will not be covered for this service by Sanofi Genzyme.

For more information on MS and other MS treatments

For more information about teriflunomide (Aubagio), and other MS treatments please visit:
<https://www.msaustralia.org.au/about-ms/medications-treatments>

General information

- The TGA provide a helpful Fact Sheet regarding generic medicines, please visit:
<https://www.tga.gov.au/sites/default/files/information-generic-prescription-medicines.pdf>
 - Speak to your neurologist about what treatment best suits your individual circumstances.
 - MS Nurses can also provide information, training and ongoing support in managing your immunotherapy.
 - For information about MS, MS treatments and to find contact details for your state MS organisation visit **www.msaustralia.org.au**
 - MS Research Australia provides information on the latest research and clinical trials at
www.msra.org.au
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Note:

MS Australia does not recommend any specific disease modifying treatment for people living with MS. Decisions about any treatments, taking into consideration the potential benefits and side effects for each individual's circumstances, should be made in careful consultation with the person's neurologist.

The information supplied in this document is collated from material provided by the relevant pharmaceutical company, the Therapeutic Goods Administration and MS Research Australia.