

# **Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) Prescribing Implementation Toolkit**

for adults and adolescents starting  
and switching treatment

**Fourth Edition**  
**Published February 2022**

**Patient Information Leaflet:  
Generics  
February 2022**

# POTENTIAL CHANGES TO YOUR ANTIRETROVIRAL MEDICATION

**Please ensure you make a note of the DOSE & STRENGTH of each medication you are taking and check the dose of your tablets each time you receive a new supply.**

If you are changing medication for side effects, detectable viral load or if you are changing the number of tablets you take, this will be discussed with you first. **However**, if you are on a **branded drug** that is available as a **generic version** the appearance may change from one supply to the next.

## What are generics?

When drugs are developed they are **patented or protected**, so only the **branded** product can be prescribed. Once a drug's patent has expired it can be manufactured as a 'generic' or unbranded version.

Most medications prescribed by the NHS are generics which are typically **much less expensive** than branded versions.

In the UK there are strict quality controls for both branded and generic versions of medicines. If your medication changes to a generic form it is nothing to worry about – the drug is the same and of the same quality, even if the pill and the packaging look different.

We already use generic HIV medications and as more become available you may be asked to change from a branded to a generic product. If this means **increasing** the number of tablets you take it will be discussed with you first, otherwise the change may happen automatically.

## EXAMPLE:

- Rezolsta is a branded tablet containing **two drugs** (darunavir + cobicistat); there generic version of darunavir which can be given with cobicistat, or a very similar drug called ritonavir. This means taking 2 pills instead of 1 but the active drug is identical, and at much lower cost.

## Why might my drugs look different?

The NHS may use different generics suppliers to ensure best value and reliable supply so the appearance of the **packaging or tablets** may CHANGE. **We don't always know when this will happen** as a lot of our medication is supplied by homecare companies rather than our own pharmacy.

This is why we ask you to make a note of your medication dose and to check the tablet strength each time you receive a new supply, as occasionally the tablet strength may differ.

**EXAMPLE:** The generic tablet containing abacavir + lamivudine or tenofovir-disoproxil + emtricitabine may come from different suppliers, so the **colour or shape** of the tablets and the packaging may differ, but the active drug is the same.

**EXAMPLE:** lamivudine comes in 150mg & 300mg strengths; you will either need to take TWO or ONE a day depending on the dose.

**Please contact your local clinic  
< INSERT DETAILS >**

**if you have any questions or concerns about your medication.**