



# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**SUBJECT:** DHS AUTOMATIC GENERIC MEDICATION SUBSTITUTION POLICY  
**POLICY NO:** 329.003

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## PURPOSE:

To define the Department of Health Services' (DHS') policy on the conversion of a brand name prescription to the generic equivalent when dispensed at a DHS pharmacy.

To define a list of drugs or agents **NOT** recommended for generic auto-substitution.

## POLICY:

DHS recognizes that FDA-approved generic medications may be reasonable alternatives to brand name medications and are often clinically appropriate and an effective means to control medication costs. DHS will utilize the following guidelines when substituting generic medications.

## GUIDELINES:

1. Both outpatient and inpatient pharmacies will auto-substitute a brand name medication to its generic equivalent, without prior approval of the prescribing physician, whenever the generic medication has an "AB" bio-equivalency rating in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Orange Book. The substituted generic product shall have the same active chemical ingredients as the prescribed brand name product, as well as the same strength, quantity and dosage form. The name of the generic medication shall be indicated on the prescription label, except where the prescriber orders otherwise.<sup>1</sup>
2. Due to safety concerns with narrow therapeutic index medications and lack of AB-rated bioequivalence, the following products will not be substituted with a generic product:
  - Digoxin
3. Generic auto-substitution will **NOT** occur under any of the following conditions:
  - Generic drugs that do not have an FDA "AB" rating in comparison to the brand name medication.
  - The acquisition cost of the brand name drug is less than the cost of the generic version.
  - The prescribing physician has specified, on the prescription, that substitution is not permitted.

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<sup>1</sup> California Business and Professions Code 4073, 2013 Lawbook for Pharmacy, California State Board of Pharmacy

**APPROVED BY:**

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** April 9, 2013

**REVIEW DATES:** April 9, 2013

**SUPERSEDES:** May 30, 2012