



## The generic name is not the same as the INN

Martha has just had her prescription filled by her pharmacist. She's puzzled:

- My doctor told me she was prescribing me a generic. But the names on the box and the prescription are different.
- Your doctor prescribed you diclofenac. That's the INN - the International Nonproprietary Name - which tells you exactly what the drug contains.
- But what's in the box you gave me then? Is it the same thing? Is it really a generic?

Her pharmacist explains:

- This drug was first sold in France under the brand name Voltarene°. Copies, or generics, arrived on the market a few years later. All these products contain the same active substance, diclofenac, and have exactly the same effects. Some generics have brand names that include the INN, such as Diclofenac Wonder° or Diclofenac Gold°, but others like Voldal° and Xenid° don't.
- It's so confusing! exclaims Martha.
- That's why it's best always to trust the INN. Only the INN is a drug's real name. Every drug has its own INN, but not all drugs have generics.

### **The INN is a drug's true name A generic is a copy of drug**

The INN (International Nonproprietary Name) is quite simply a drug's real name. Created by the World Health Organization (WHO), the INN system is used throughout the world. It allows healthcare professionals and patients to identify a drug precisely and with confidence, and to avoid potentially serious adverse effects due to confusion between drugs. With the INN, everything is simpler, clearer and more precise.

**Ask your doctor and pharmacist to explain the INN system**



"The INN campaign: a drug's real name": explanations and other materials produced by the Medicines in Europe Forum are available from the following websites:

– Association Mieux Prescrire ([www.prescrire.org](http://www.prescrire.org))

– Fédération Nationale de la Mutualité Française ([www.mutualite.fr](http://www.mutualite.fr))

– Union Fédérale des Consommateurs Que Choisir ([www.quechoisir.org](http://www.quechoisir.org))

The INN, a drug's real name: leaflets are available to download for free at

[www.prescrire.org](http://www.prescrire.org), along with explanations of the reasons for using the INN and the (rare) drawbacks.