



## New England Carpenters Benefit Funds Health Fund

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### New England Carpenters Health Benefits Fund

The New England Carpenters Health Benefits Plan is pleased to offer affordable prescription drug coverage to its participants. In an effort to maintain low co-pays and to continue to offer new, state-of-the-art medications, we are making some changes to the prescription drug program.

### It Pays to Use Generics!

**Starting February 1, 2013**, if you fill a prescription for a brand-name medication when a generic equivalent is available, **you will pay the applicable co-payment for the brand-name drug *plus* the difference in cost between the brand and the generic.** So, if the brand-name drug is \$200 and the generic version is \$150, you'll pay the difference (\$50) out of your own pocket in addition to the co-pay for brand-name drugs.

The New England Carpenters has a high number of Health Benefits Fund participants who use Statin drugs (to reduce cholesterol levels) and Proton Pump Inhibitives (used to treat GERD or acid reflux). Most of the drugs prescribed for these conditions have a generic version available, and the difference in cost between the brand name and the generic can be dramatic. By asking for the generic version of your medication, you can save big money for yourself and for the Fund.

### What if the Generic Doesn't Work for Me?

Every once in a while, a patient will not have the same outcome with the generic version of a drug as they may with the brand-name version. If this is the case for you, we will talk to your doctor and work with you to make sure you receive the appropriate medication to treat your condition at the appropriate co-pay.

### Facts about Generic Drugs

According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), 80% of prescriptions filled in the US are for generic drugs, and that number is expected to grow. Here are some facts about generics that might surprise you:

- **Generic drugs are required to have the same active ingredient, strength, dosage form, and route of administration as brand-name drugs.**
- **All generic manufacturing, packaging, and testing sites must pass the same quality standards as those of brand name drugs, and the generics must meet the same exacting specifications as any brand name product.**

- **Research shows that generics work just as well as brand name drugs.**
- **On average, the cost of a generic is 80 to 85 percent lower than the brand name product.**
- **Cheaper does not mean lower quality:**
  - Generic manufacturers are able to sell their products for lower prices because they are not required to repeat the costly clinical trials of new drugs.
  - Generally, generic manufacturers do not pay for costly advertising, marketing, and promotion.
  - Multiple generic companies are often approved to market a single product; this creates competition in the market place, often resulting in lower prices.

## **New Specialty Pharmacy: Diplomat**

Although we still use Medco/Express Scripts to manage our day-to-day prescription drug plan, our Fund uses a “specialty pharmacy” to handle the administration of higher-cost drugs for various cancer conditions, Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Rheumatoid Arthritis, or Hepatitis C. **Beginning January 1, 2013, our Plan’s specialty pharmacy will be Diplomat.** Diplomat offers improved services and delivery at a lower cost to the Fund than our current specialty pharmacy—Accredo.

If you do not use the specialty pharmacy for medication, this change will not affect you. However, for our members that do use this higher-cost class of drugs—expect to receive information from Diplomat about this transition. We are expecting a smooth transition from Accredo to Diplomat without any disruption to your service.

### **What is Diplomat?**

Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy is headquartered in Flint Michigan and has been in business for more than 35 years. They are privately owned—not owned by a pharmacy benefit manager, managed care organization or chain pharmacy. Over the years, Diplomat has grown to become the nation’s largest independent pharmacy in terms of sales, staffing, and services offered. We believe they will be a good partner for our Fund, and customer-focused for our members.

If you have any questions, contact the Fund Office by calling 800-344-1515 or visit Diplomat online at [www.diplomatpharmacy.com](http://www.diplomatpharmacy.com).

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