

## Could 3-D printing technology transform drug industry?

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Over the past decade, 3-D printers have been hailed as changing everything from [fashion](#) to [firearms](#). Now, they're coming to the pharmaceutical business—or, at least, they seem to be.

Recently, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the first 3-D-printed pill: *Spritam levetiracetam*, a drug which can reduce seizures among epileptics. Manufactured by the American pharmaceutical company Aprelia, it's produced not by [a tableting machine](#), but by a special process where the drug's active and inactive ingredients are laid down layer-by-layer.

Aprelia has now become the first major pharmaceutical company to print drugs. That means it now owns key intellectual property governing its own (presumably successful) version of the technique. Spritam's website brags that Aprelia now [holds more than 50 patents](#) protecting its own 3-D printing technique and 3-D-printed pharmaceuticals in general. These patents will help it maintain a competitive advantage until 2033, it says.

It's unclear, however, whether 3-D printing will be able to change the drug industry in quite the way this technology is predicted to shape other fields. The usual story goes like this: Three-dimensional printing, by virtue of extruding plastic or metal at a small scale, permits a kind of localized, personalized production. That production might still be mass, for sure, but it's mass-distributed, a kind of mass production where everyone gets their own special snowflake—or [their own unique piece of jewelry](#).

**Read full, original post:** [3-D Printed Drugs Are Here](#)