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PSYCHIATRY

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PATIENT EDUCATION

Varenicline

Generic tablets / Chantix reference

A guide for adults taking varenicline.
Follow the directions on your prescription and your provider's recommendations.

NICOTINE-FREE TABLET | AFTER FOOD, WITH A FULL GLASS OF WATER

Formulations: Oral tablets are increased gradually over the first week. Kidney impairment can require a lower dose or different schedule.

What it is used for

Varenicline helps adults stop smoking. It works best with a quit plan and behavioral support. The plan may use a fixed quit date, a flexible date, or gradual reduction before quitting.

How it works

It partly stimulates alpha-4-beta-2 nicotinic receptors while reducing nicotine's ability to activate them fully. This can ease cravings and make smoking less rewarding.

What to expect over time

Cravings and smoking satisfaction may change during the first week. A course often lasts 12 weeks and may be extended based on response. Review nausea or sleep problems before stopping.

Taking your medication

- Follow the starting schedule and take after eating with a full glass of water.
- Use the quit-date or gradual-reduction plan agreed with your provider.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless it is almost time for the next dose. Then skip it. Do not double a dose.
- Do not double doses or abandon care after a smoking lapse.

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VARENICLINE / 02

Side effects and safety

Possible side effects

- Nausea
- Vivid or unusual dreams
- Insomnia or sleepiness
- Constipation, gas, or vomiting

Keeping track of treatment

Some side effects resolve with time; others may require a change of medication. Discuss persistent or bothersome side effects with your provider.

Track smoking, cravings, mood, sleep, and alcohol response. Serious mood or behavior changes can occur during treatment or a quit attempt and require prompt attention.

If you take too much

For a suspected overdose, call Poison Control at **1-800-222-1222** immediately, even if you feel well. Call 911 for a seizure, collapse, trouble breathing, or inability to wake.

Before you start

Discuss kidney disease, seizures, psychiatric history, alcohol use, pregnancy, and breastfeeding. A prior serious skin or allergic reaction to varenicline rules out reuse.

Medicines and interactions

Review all your medications with your provider, including over-the-counter medicines and supplements. Have new medications checked before taking them.

Stopping smoking can raise levels of medicines such as clozapine or olanzapine because tobacco smoke affects metabolism. Tell all prescribers when smoking changes.

Alcohol effects may be stronger or less predictable. Reduce or avoid it until your response is known. Review combination cessation treatment before adding nicotine or bupropion.

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Living with your treatment

When to get help

Emergency symptoms. Get emergency care for a seizure, blistering rash, facial or throat swelling, chest pain, or stroke symptoms.

Prompt medical advice. Stop varenicline and contact your provider promptly for major agitation, unusual behavior, depressed mood, or suicidal thinking. Report sleepwalking or dangerous nighttime behavior.

If you feel unsafe or have thoughts of self-harm, call 911 or go to an emergency department.

Your questions answered

What if I smoke during treatment?
A lapse does not mean the attempt is over. Review triggers and the quit plan; do not take extra tablets.

Is the old psychiatric warning still relevant?
The boxed warning was removed, but mood and behavior changes still need attention.

Everyday tips

Plan support for predictable smoking triggers.

Tell your team about smoking changes even when another medication dose has stayed the same.

Storage and safety

Keep medication in its labeled container, away from excess heat and moisture and out of reach of children and pets. Do not share it. Ask a pharmacy about disposal of unused medication.

Sources

Official prescribing information: varenicline
Official prescribing information: varenicline

Educational handout; does not replace your prescription or provider's recommendations.