

# Varenicline (Chantix®)

## Information for Quitting Tobacco

### About Chantix®:

Chantix® is a prescription medicine and it does not contain nicotine. It works by blocking nicotine from attaching to receptor cells in the brain. It can decrease your urge to use tobacco.

### How to Use It:

Schedule a day to stop smoking or using tobacco. Begin Chantix® before this date, usually about one week before your quit day.

### Usual Directions:

#### Week 1

- For the first 3 days, take a white Chantix® pill once a day. (0.5 mg pill)
- For the next 4 days, take a white Chantix® pill in the morning and one in the evening.

#### Week 2

- Starting on Day 8, take one blue Chantix® pill in the morning and one blue Chantix® pill in the evening. Continue this pattern, taking one blue pill twice a day. (1 mg pill)

*Always check in with your healthcare provider as he/she may decide a different dose is best for you, or may suggest that you take a more gradual approach when starting Chantix®.*

### Helpful Tips:

- If possible, plan to stop smoking completely on your quit day.
- If you are unable to completely stop tobacco, keep taking the Chantix and try to reduce the amount you use. Make it your goal to stop tobacco completely.
- If you miss a morning dose, you can make it up later in the morning. If you don't remember until the afternoon, just take one pill at your usual evening dose time.
- Chantix® is usually prescribed for 12 weeks or longer.
- Do not take Chantix® at bedtime.
- Always take Chantix® with a glass of water and with food. This helps to prevent nausea, which can be a side effect. However, nausea usually gets better after a week or so.

### Common Side Effects Include:

- Nausea or vomiting
- Heartburn
- Headaches
- Drowsiness
- Dizziness or trouble concentrating
- Unusual dreams or changes in sleep
- Constipation or gas

## **Safety Warnings:**

You may have heard of concerns about changes in behavior, excessive anger, hostility, agitation, depressed mood, and suicidal thoughts or suicidal actions that may happen while using Chantix®.

**Recent research has proven that these side effects do not happen as often due to taking Chantix® as was once believed. The package warnings have been removed.**

However, if you or your family notice any of these symptoms, or develop hallucinations, panic attacks, confusion or abnormal sensations and they are not typical for you, stop taking Chantix® right away and call your doctor or seek medical care. If in doubt, call your doctor.

Decrease the amount of alcohol you drink when starting Chantix® until you know how Chantix® affects you or your ability to tolerate alcohol.

Do not drive or operate machinery until you are certain that the medicine is not making you drowsy or confused. Sleep walking can happen with Chantix®, and can sometimes lead to behavior that is harmful to you. Stop taking Chantix® and tell your doctor if this happens.

Before starting Chantix®, tell your doctor if you have a history of heart or blood vessel problems. If you have new or worse heart or blood vessel symptoms during treatment, tell your doctor. Get emergency medical help right away if you have symptoms of a heart attack or stroke.

Please inform your health care provider if you have a history of depression, other mental health problems, or kidney problems. Please do not use Chantix® if you are pregnant or breast feeding unless recommended by your health care provider.

## **Other Considerations:**

Do not take Chantix® if you have serious allergic or skin reaction to Chantix®. Some people can have reactions while taking this medicine which can sometimes be life-threatening. This can include symptoms such as:

- Swelling of the face, lips, tongue, throat, arms or legs
- Rash, such as hives
- Trouble breathing or swallowing
- Swelling, red, peeling or blistering skin or mouth blisters

**KEEP THIS MEDICINE IN THE TIGHTLY CLOSED CONTAINER OUT OF REACH OF ALL CHILDREN AND PETS. STORE IT AWAY FROM HEAT AND HUMIDITY – DO NOT STORE IT IN THE BATHROOM.**

**The information on this handout can change. Refer to package inserts, and talk to your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns.**

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MaineHealth  
**Center for Tobacco  
Independence**