

Varenicline

Chantix, Tyrvaya (nasal spray for dry eye), a medicine that helps people stop smoking

Varenicline takes the edge off nicotine cravings and makes cigarettes far less satisfying if you do smoke.

WHAT IT TREATS

Quitting smoking

HOW YOU TAKE IT

Twice daily, with food

WHEN IT WORKS

Start a week before you quit

HABIT FORMING

No

✔ This medicine carries **no special FDA safety warning** of that kind.

① WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Varenicline** partly fills the nicotine spot in your brain, so withdrawal eases while cigarettes stop delivering much.
- It is the single most effective quit medicine we have, and it roughly doubles or triples your chance of staying stopped.
- It is not a nicotine product and it is not habit forming. There is no high and nothing to come off of.
- Nicotine dependence is a medical condition, not a character flaw. Needing help to stop is completely ordinary.

② HOW TO TAKE IT

- Start it about **1 week before** your quit day, so it has time to build up while you are still smoking.
- Take it twice a day, after food, with a full glass of water. That single habit prevents most of the nausea.
- The amount steps up over the first week. Follow the pack exactly, because the low starting days are what settle your stomach.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless the next one is near. Do not take two doses together.
- If your quit day slips, keep taking it and pick a new day within the next few weeks. Do not stop and restart.

📈 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Cravings usually start easing in the first week. Many people find cigarettes taste flat or disappointing by week two.
- A standard course is **12 weeks**. If you have stopped smoking by then, another 12 weeks makes staying stopped more likely.
- Slipping once does not undo the work. Keep taking it, tell your prescriber, and treat the slip as information.
- It works best with a bit of coaching. A free quitline or the Smokefree app roughly doubles what the medicine does alone.
- Some people use a nicotine patch alongside it. Ask your prescriber, because the combination helps certain people more.

♥ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Nausea is the most common effect, usually mild. Food, a full glass of water, and a slower step up nearly always fix it.
- Vivid, strange, or very busy dreams are common and harmless. Taking the evening dose with dinner instead of bedtime can help.
- Trouble sleeping is common in the first weeks. Keep caffeine early in the day and hold a steady bedtime.
- Headache and gas or constipation happen often. Water, fiber, and a short daily walk usually handle it.
- A change in taste can happen and it usually settles. Some people find it helps cigarettes lose their appeal.
- Mood swings, irritability, and low mood can come from quitting itself. Tell someone rather than sitting alone with it.

⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Call **988** if thoughts of ending your life show up, or if your mood drops sharply.
- Call **911** for a seizure, chest pain, sudden weakness, or trouble speaking.
- Call your prescriber for a rash that spreads, blisters, or peels.
- Call your prescriber for agitation, confusion, or behavior that is not like you.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Alcohol can hit harder on this medicine, and some people have been unusually aggressive or blacked out. Drink less, or not at all.
- Do not drive or use machines until you know how it affects your sleep, alertness, and mood.
- Tell your prescriber about kidney problems or any history of seizures, since both change how this is used.
- If you are pregnant or planning to be, talk it over first. Quitting is vital, but the right method may differ.
- Tell your prescriber about depression or bipolar disorder, so mood can be watched closely while you quit.

① STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Finish the full course if you can. Stopping early is the most common reason a quit attempt falls apart.
- There is no withdrawal from this medicine itself, so it can be stopped without lowering it in steps.
- If side effects are the problem, ask about a lower amount or a slower start before giving up on it.
- Free coaching is available any day at **1-800-QUIT-NOW**, and it works well alongside this medicine.

② QUESTIONS TO ASK

- When exactly should I set my quit day after starting this?
- Should I use a nicotine patch alongside this medicine?
- How long do you want me to keep taking it after I stop smoking?
- What mood changes should make me call you right away?

Where this information comes from

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NOTE

Sources are listed in APA 7th edition style. This handout is general information about a medicine, not medical advice, and it does not replace the instructions from your own prescriber or pharmacist. Never start, change, or stop a medicine on your own. If you think you are having a serious reaction, call your prescriber; if you cannot breathe, cannot stay awake, or are thinking of harming yourself, call 911 or 988 right away.