

# Patient Medication Guide

# VARENICLINE

**Medication together with behavioral counseling gives you the best chance of quitting tobacco.**


## **WHAT DOES THIS MEDICATION DO?**

Varenicline is used to help you quit tobacco by blocking the pleasant effects of tobacco on the brain and reducing withdrawal. It is recommended you participate in behavioral counseling when using this medication to increase your likelihood of staying tobacco free.

## **HOW DO I USE IT?**

- Set a date on which you intend to stop tobacco use. The medicine needs to be started at least one week before your intended stop date. You may start the medication and then stop tobacco use within 1-2 weeks.
- The medication is typically used for 12-24 weeks if you are able to quit within the first few weeks of starting the medication. Even if you have already stopped tobacco use after 12 weeks of medication, your prescriber may keep you on this medication for up to another 12 weeks in order to prevent a return to using tobacco.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you can. If it is almost time for the next dose, wait until then to use the medicine and skip the missed dose, do not double up.
- If you slip up and use tobacco while taking the medicine, don't give up. Continue to take the medicine and try not to use tobacco. Call your VA provider, the **1-855-QUIT-VET** tobacco quitline (**1-855-784-8838**), or attend a tobacco cessation group to help you get back on track.

### **Sample schedule of varenicline usage for the first 2 weeks**

	Day 1-3	Day 4-7	Day 8-14 Quit Day*	After Day 14*
9 AM	 0.5 mg pill	 0.5 mg pill	 1 mg pill	 1 mg pill
5 PM		 0.5 mg pill	 1 mg pill	 1 mg pill

*\*Set your quit date between day 8 and day 14. Continue taking varenicline for 12-24 weeks as advised by your provider.*

## **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS?**

- Common side effects include nausea, vomiting, constipation, headache, strange dreams and trouble sleeping.
- Nausea and vomiting may be relieved by taking the medicine with food and a full glass of water.
- It may take a few weeks to feel the full benefits of this medicine.
- This medicine may cause drowsiness, dizziness or problems with concentration. Make sure you know how you react to this medicine before you drive or use heavy machinery because of potential for loss of consciousness, seizures, muscle spasms, visual disturbances or hallucinations.
- If you experience serious types of allergic reactions — itching, rash, hive-like swelling, trouble breathing, or chest tightness — stop taking the medicine right away and contact your provider.
- There have been rare reports of increased symptoms of depression, anger, irritability, and suicidal ideation among a small number of patients who use varenicline. As with any medication, if you experience any of these effects, please contact your medical provider immediately.
- **If you are in crisis, call: 988 or 1-800-273-TALK and press 1 to talk to someone now.**