

PROVIDER QUICK POINTS

PROVIDER INFORMATION

Chantix Recall and Shortage

At the end of June 2021, Pfizer announced they are stopping the global production of Chantix (varenicline), a medication used to assist people in ceasing the use of tobacco. On July 19, 2021, Pfizer issued a voluntary recall for Chantix due to the presence of an impurity which could cause cancer. Now there is a Chantix shortage due to a manufacturing delay to evaluate the impurity ingredient of the product.

Products Affected:

Please see the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) website for a list of affected products:

<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-safety-and-availability/fda-updates-and-press-announcements-nitrosamine-varenicline-chantix>

The FDA isn't currently advising people to stop taking Chantix. The potential risk of cancer with this impurity is more of a concern with medications taken long-term. Chantix is typically only taken for 3 to 6 months. The health benefits that come from quitting tobacco far outweigh the potential risks of continuing to take Chantix. If a member decides to stop taking Chantix, they should talk to their pharmacist or doctor about treatment options.

Impacted members and their prescribers will be notified of the Chantix recall.

If members and their providers decide it's best to stop Chantix — or if member cannot get a prescription refilled due to Pfizer's halt in production — there are other options to help to quit smoking. The following alternatives to Chantix are available. Coverage of prescription and/or OTC tobacco cessation products may vary depending on the member's benefit design.

- Nicotine Replacement Therapy: Including nicotine patches, lozenges, gum, inhaler, and nasal spray
- bupropion extended-release 12 hr (smoking deterrent)

Estimated resupply dates of Chantix is unknown at this time, but Pfizer does not intend to adjust their manufacturing approach due to loss of the Chantix patent in 2021. A generic is expected to be released into the market late 2021.

To address this shortage, the FDA is temporarily allowing the importation of the non-FDA approved drug Apo-Varenicline from Canada to increase the availability of the drug. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and Blue Plus will not be covering the Canadian drug Apo-Varenicline because the member benefits exclude coverage of non-FDA approved drugs.

Questions?

If you have questions, please contact provider services at **(651) 662-5200** or **1-800-262-0820**.