

Azathioprine patient information leaflet

Azathioprine is used in some auto-immune illnesses, such as rheumatoid arthritis or crohn's disease, auto-immune, hepatitis etc. where the body has an overactive immune response against itself.

- Taking azathioprine may reduce your body's resistance to infections. Try keep away from people you know are ill.
- Take your dose during or after eating food.
- Avoid direct sunlight by staying out of the sun, covering up and using high factor sun creams.

How to take azathioprine

- Read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet.
- Take the tablets with or immediately after food.
- Try to take azathioprine at the same time each day to avoid missing any doses.
- If you do forget to take a dose, take one as soon as you remember but do not take two doses at the same time to make up for a missed dose.

Getting the most from your treatment

- You will need regular blood tests while you are taking azathioprine. The surgery will now take over the monitoring of your blood tests.
- It is important to try to avoid anyone who is suffering from chickenpox or shingles. Tell your doctor if you come into contact with anyone with these infections.
- Make sure you tell the nurse or doctor that you are taking azathioprine before you have any vaccinations. Azathioprine lowers the body's resistance and there is a chance either that you may get an infection from the vaccine or that the vaccine will not work properly. You should not have live vaccinations (like rubella) while on azathioprine.
- While you are taking azathioprine you may become more sensitive to the harmful effects of sunlight. Avoid sitting out in the sun and use a sun cream of factor 15 or higher.
- If you are having any treatment like an operation or dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment that you are taking azathioprine.
- If you buy any medicines, check with a pharmacist that they are safe to take with your other medicines.
- If you need antibiotics for an infection you may need to stop your azathioprine for a few days – check with the doctor treating you for infection.

Can azathioprine cause side effects?

Along with their useful effects all medicines can cause unwanted side-effects. These will be listed in the manufacturers information leaflet. These usually improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine. Speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the side-effects continue or become troublesome.

• Important: if you experience any of the following symptoms speak with your doctor immediately or go to your local accident and emergency department without delay:

- any unexplained bruising or bleeding
- a high temperature or other sign of an infection
- signs of an allergic reaction such as extreme tiredness, dizziness, being sick, diarrhoea, fever, muscle pain or stiffness, skin rash
- kidney problems such as a change in the amount or colour of your urine

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to this medicine either

contact the surgery on **01332 667911** or
if you are under the rheumatologists phone the rheumatology nurse advice line on **01332 787710** and leave a message.

Call **111** if out of hours /weekend
or for urgent, issue side effects to Azathioprine - I B D help line
01332 785504