

Azithromycin



Why have I been prescribed Azithromycin?

You have been prescribed Azithromycin to try and improve your chest symptoms. Azithromycin can work in two different ways:

- It is an antibiotic and is capable of killing a number of the bugs (bacteria) that cause chest infections.
- It has an anti-inflammatory effect in the airways and can significantly reduce the number of infections and help with symptoms such as cough, sputum production and breathlessness.

What dose do I take?

Take one capsule (250 or 500mg strength) 3 times a week – usually Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Sometimes people are prescribed 250mg daily, one capsule a day.

What are the side effects?

Overall, Azithromycin is very well tolerated and the majority of people are able to continue with this treatment without significant side effects.

Some people cannot tolerate Azithromycin usually due to tummy upset, diarrhoea, constipation, or development of a skin rash.

Azithromycin can very occasionally cause changes in your ECG (heart tracing). Your doctors will routinely check your ECG prior to starting the medication. If you experience any symptoms of light headedness, dizziness or palpitations (fast heart rate) contact your doctor.

Azithromycin can also very occasionally upset the liver. We will check your liver function before starting the drug and we ask your GP to check liver blood tests about 2 weeks after starting treatment to check for this. If you experience yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes or any severe stomach pains contact your doctor.

Rarely, Azithromycin can lead to hearing loss. The first symptom of this can be tinnitus (ringing in the ears). If you experience any problems with your hearing contact your doctor.

Azithromycin can also make you more prone to sunburn and we recommend using sun block on hot sunny days or when on holiday.

Your doctor will ask you to provide sputum samples or review previous samples to check for slow growing bacteria which can infect the lungs of people with lung disease. It is important that we check for this infection prior to starting Azithromycin as treatment can mask the infection.

If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: customer care@salisbury.nhs.uk

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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What if I forget to take my Azithromycin?

If you forget to take your Azithromycin, there is no cause for concern and you should just take your next dosage as scheduled.

How long will I be on this medication?

We usually keep people on Azithromycin for between 6 and 12 months (if side effects aren't a problem) before deciding if it is working.

If it is reducing the number of infections that you suffer from and / or significantly reducing your symptoms such as cough, sputum production and breathlessness, then we usually like to keep it going in the longer term. Your team may consider a "holiday" or break from treatment after 12 months if things are stable. Treatment would then be restarted after this break. In some units treatment is given for 6 months over the winter, then a summer break and restart in the winter.

However, for some people who have lots of infections treatment is given safely all year round.

Can Azithromycin interact with any of my other tablets?

Yes – Azithromycin can possibly interact with other medicines. Check with your doctor and/or pharmacist before taking any new medicines or over the counter medicines.

What should I do if I suffer a flare up of my chest disease?

Although Azithromycin is an antibiotic, you will still need to take courses of antibiotics for flare ups/chest infections in the usual way. You may need to stop your Azithromycin when starting a course of antibiotics. Your team will let you know if this is required.

The antibiotics you receive should be guided by your previous sputum samples and treatments but the type of antibiotic you receive for infections may change now you are on Azithromycin treatment.

Can I drink alcohol when taking Azithromycin?

Yes, in moderation – there is no interaction with alcohol.

How to store Azithromycin?

Keep Sandoz Azithromycin and all medicines out of reach of children. Store Sandoz Azithromycin at controlled room temperature (between 15–30°C)

Respiratory Nurses

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