

Respiratory medicine

Azithromycin in COPD

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

Read this leaflet carefully before starting your medicine.

You should also read the leaflet that is in the box with your azithromycin. This is from the drug company. It gives you extra information about your medicine.

This medicine has been prescribed for you. Do not pass it on to others. It may harm them, even if their symptoms are the same as yours. Keep this leaflet. You may need to read it again

What is azithromycin?

Azithromycin is an antibiotic. It is like others that you may have taken before such as clarithromycin or erythromycin. Your doctor has recommended you take this medicine to prevent exacerbations of your COPD or chest infections

How should I take it?

You should take 250mg or 500mg three times per week. For example, every Monday, Wednesday and Friday OR every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

You should take your tablets either 1 hour before a meal or 2 hours after a meal.

Do not take azithromycin if:

- you are allergic to azithromycin or any other macrolide antibiotic. These include erythromycin or clarithromycin. An allergic reaction may cause skin rash or wheezing
- you are taking any ergot derivatives. These include ergotamine, which is used to treat migraine. These medicines should not be taken at the same time as azithromycin

What are the side effects?

Like all medicines, azithromycin can cause side effects, although not everybody gets them. Contact your doctor if you are experiencing side effects while taking this medicine.

Stop taking azithromycin if you have any of the following symptoms after taking this medicine. Tell your doctor immediately, as the effects can be severe:

- sudden wheeziness, difficulty in breathing. Swelling of eyelids, face or lips. Rash or itching (especially affecting the whole body)
- severe or prolonged diarrhoea, which may have blood or mucus in it. This may be a sign of serious bowel inflammation
- rapid or irregular heartbeat
- low blood pressure

Abdominal cramping

The commonest side effect is abdominal cramping or diarrhoea, or both. This happens to up to 1 in 10 people (10%) taking this medicine.

Liver

Azithromycin can cause inflammation of the liver in up to 1 in 20 people (5%) taking this medicine. This is usually reversible if the treatment is stopped.

You should stop this medicine and contact your doctor for advice if:

- you become itchy
- or your skin or eyes become yellow
- or you have pain in the upper right-hand side of your abdomen
- or you develop a rash

Heart tracing

Azithromycin can cause changes in your heart tracing (ECG). This does not happen often. Your doctors will routinely check your ECG before you start the medication.

Contact your doctor if you experience

- light headedness
- dizziness
- palpitations (fast heart rate)

Hearing and balance

Azithromycin may cause trouble with:

- your hearing
- or a ringing in your ears (tinnitus)
- altered balance in people taking this medicine for a long time.

In many cases this returns to normal if the treatment is stopped. If this happens, you should stop your treatment and contact your doctor for advice.

Take special care with Azithromycin if:

Your doctor needs to know before you take Azithromycin if you have, or have had, any of the following conditions:

- kidney problems
- heart conditions
- liver problems

Azithromycin contains lactose, a type of sugar. If you have an intolerance to some sugars tell your doctor before taking Azithromycin.

What should I do if I get an infection while taking this medicine?

Your doctor will normally have recommended a 'rescue antibiotic' to be used if you get an infection.

Sometimes you should take this with your azithromycin. Sometimes your doctor will recommend you increase your azithromycin dose – taking 250mg or 500mg every day instead of three times a week.

What if I am admitted to hospital?

If you are admitted because of your chest and are given intravenous (IV) antibiotics, you should normally stop your azithromycin. Once your IV antibiotics have stopped you should start taking your azithromycin again as before. You will be told what to do.

What if I take more azithromycin than I should or miss a dose?

If you take too much azithromycin

- you may feel unwell
- tell your doctor or contact your nearest hospital casualty department immediately

If you forget to take azithromycin:

- take it as soon as you can
- take your next dose at the right time
- do not take a double dose to make up for a forgotten dose

Further information, questions or concerns?

Your GP will prescribe your azithromycin. Your hospital specialist team will ask them to do this. Please ask your GP if you need more medication.

Please tell your doctor or pharmacist if any side effects get serious. Also tell them if you notice any side effects not listed in the manufacturer's leaflet.

Your consultant is **Contact number.....**

Alternatively, contact the medicines helpline on 020 3311 1703 or visit www.imperial.nhs.uk/our-services/pharmacy/patient-information

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk