

Can I start a family or breastfeed?

- Azathioprine may potentially cause harm to the fetus.
- It may also affect sperm formation and quantity.
- Please tell your doctor if you are pregnant, preparing for pregnancy or breastfeeding before you begin the treatment.

How should I store the medicine?

- Keep the tablets away from heat, moist and direct sunlight.
- Keep all medication out of reach of children.
- Do not dispose any medicines via wastewater or household waste. Ask your pharmacist how to dispose of medicines which are no longer needed. These measures will help to protect the environment.

In Summary

What you need to know about azathioprine?

- Take azathioprine approximately at the same time every day, unless instructed otherwise by your doctor.
- Always come for your blood tests on the scheduled date.
- Beware of the side effects and know when to seek immediate medical attention.
- Do not take over-the-counter medicines, supplements or herbal medicines without checking with your doctor/pharmacist/advanced practiced nurse first.
- For patients who intend to start a family, consult your doctor before you start the treatment.
- If you have any questions about the treatment, please discuss it with your doctor/advanced practice nurse at 65762418 or Pharmacist at 63265077.

Produced by
Department of Pharmacy
Department of Rheumatology & Immunology



Outram Road
Singapore 169608
www.sgh.com.sg

Reg. No.: 198703907Z
Information correct as at August 2016

PATIENTS. AT THE HEART OF ALL WE DO.®

Printing supported by
The Janssen logo, consisting of the word 'janssen' in a lowercase, sans-serif font, followed by a stylized blue 'J' symbol.

Azathioprine



About your medicine

- Azathioprine is one of the disease-modifying-anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs) which can modify the progress of rheumatoid disease by reducing permanent damage to joints caused by inflammation.
- It can also be used to treat kidney disease (lupus nephritis) in people with lupus.
- It may be combined with other DMARDs or biologic agents to control the disease.

How is the medicine given?

- It is given orally, after food to prevent stomach upset, usually once or twice a day.
- A typical dose will range from 50mg to 150mg a day, varying from person to person, depending upon factors such as disease activity and response to the treatment.
- Azathioprine tablets should be swallowed whole, with a glass of water. The tablets should not be crushed or chewed.

How long does it take for the medicine to be effective?

- It usually takes 1 to 3 months to notice any improvement in symptoms after starting azathioprine.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

- If you have missed a dose, take it as soon as you remember.
- If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and continue with your regular dosing schedule.
- Do not double the dose to make up for the missed dose.

What are the possible side effects of the medicine?

- In general, azathioprine may cause some side effects.
- Common side effects:
 - Nausea
 - Vomiting
 - Loss of appetite
 - Dizziness
 - Headache
- Rare side effects:
 - Raised liver enzymes
 - Drop in blood counts

IF YOU NOTICE ANY SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS, OR OTHER SIDE EFFECTS NOT LISTED IN THIS LEAFLET, PLEASE TELL YOUR DOCTOR OR PHARMACIST.

When do I seek immediate medical attention?

- Come back to the hospital if you have:
 - Signs of an allergic reaction such as rash, hives, itching, blistered or peeling skin, wheezing, tightness in the chest or throat, difficulty breathing or talking, unusual hoarseness of voice, or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue or throat
 - High fever (exceeds 38°C), or other symptoms of infection such as chills, cough or painful urination
 - Feeling very tired or weak
 - Excessive diarrhoea and/or vomiting. Very bad skin irritation
 - Jaundice (yellowing of skin or whites of eyes)
 - Breathlessness

What should I do when I am taking the medicine?

- Azathioprine should be handled with care during administration. If the dose prescribed requires cutting of the tablet, use a tablet cutter and do not share it with other people. Wash your hands after handling the tablet cutter.
- Come back to the hospital for regular blood tests as instructed by your doctor. This is important as adverse effects can happen at any time during the course of treatment, and some side effects may not show symptoms.
- Avoid overcrowded places.

Can I take other medicine or supplements?

- Your doctor may prescribe pain-relieving treatment since azathioprine is not a painkiller.
- Azathioprine may not be suitable with certain gout medication, e.g. allopurinol.
- Always check with the doctor or pharmacist first before self-treatment with any over-the-counter medicines.
- Do not take any supplements, alternative or herbal medicines without informing your doctor or pharmacist.

What special dietary instructions should I follow?

- Maintain adequate hydration (2 to 3 litres of fluid a day, unless otherwise advised by your doctor) and nutrition (small, frequent meals are preferred).
- Do not consume raw or undercooked food.
- Alcohol should be avoided if possible or kept to a minimum as suggested by your doctor because alcohol may increase the risk of liver toxicity associated with azathioprine.