

Does Azathioprine affect fertility or pregnancy?

Azathioprine does not affect fertility. It may be continued throughout pregnancy and breastfeeding. However, the nature of your disease may affect pregnancy. You are advised to consult your doctor if you are planning to conceive.

Can I have immunisations while on Azathioprine?

Pneumococcal, influenza, hepatitis A and B, tetanus vaccinations are allowed. Avoid immunisations with live vaccines such as polio, varicella (chicken pox), measles, mumps and rubella (MMR).

Are there any alternatives to Azathioprine?

Your doctor will advise you on the safest and most effective option. If you have any concerns, do raise them with your doctor.

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Medication Information for Patients

AZATHIOPRINE



Why am I being prescribed Azathioprine?

Azathioprine is used to treat several diseases, including systemic lupus erythematosus (also known as lupus), other connective tissue diseases, severe eczema, certain blood (haematological) diseases, neurological diseases (such as myasthenia gravis) as well as in patients after an organ transplant.

Azathioprine may also be prescribed to patients on steroid treatment to allow a gradual reduction of steroid doses. Azathioprine works by modifying the immune system, so it must be used with care.

When do I take Azathioprine?

Azathioprine is taken either once or twice a day, depending on your condition. It can be taken with or after food.

What dose do I take?

Your doctor will advise the dosage based on your condition. Usually, you will start on a low dose which may be increased if necessary.

When does Azathioprine work?

The effects of Azathioprine will not be visible immediately. It may take six to 12 weeks before you notice any benefit, provided you take your medication as prescribed.

Do I have to do any blood tests while taking Azathioprine?

Azathioprine may occasionally lower blood counts and cause liver inflammation. These are usually reversible if detected early. **It is not safe to continue Azathioprine if you do not come for regular blood checks.**

Should I avoid any medication while on Azathioprine?

Generally, you should show your doctor or pharmacist all other medications you are taking or plan to take, including supplements and over-the-counter medications. Allopurinol (a medication used for gout) may need to be discontinued; please inform your doctor if you are on it.

May I drink alcohol while taking Azathioprine?

There is no reason to avoid alcohol completely while taking Azathioprine, as long as it is consumed in moderation.

What if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose or forget to take your medicine, 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 next dose to make up for the missed dose.**

What are the possible risks I can expect while taking Azathioprine?

Side effects	Warning signs	Things you need to do
Mouth ulcers, rash		Stop the medication and inform your doctor
Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhoea		Your doctor may adjust the dose of your medication
Hair loss		Often transient, generally recovers when dose is reduced
Low blood count	Easy bruising, severe sore throat, tiredness, paleness	Do regular blood count monitoring as advised
Liver inflammation	Yellow eyes, tea coloured urine, constant abdominal pain	Inform your doctor if you have any history of liver disease. Do regular liver function tests.
Small increase in risk of certain cancers (skin, lymphoma)		Inform your doctor if you have any history of cancers. Apply sunscreen daily.
Small increase in risk of infections		Avoid close contact with people with coughs/colds. Discuss planned vaccinations with your doctor

Please seek medical attention if you experience any of the above symptoms.

How should I store Azathioprine?

The tablets should be stored at room temperature. Keep out of reach from children.