



## AZATHIOPRINE

*az-ah-thy-oh-preen*

### What does it do?

*Azathioprine* is an immunosuppressant medicine used to treat inflammatory conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease. It is also sometimes used for other conditions.

### How should you take it?

Take *azathioprine* regularly as directed with a glass of water. Swallow the tablets whole – do not break, crush or chew.

### What if you forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as possible. If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and carry on as normal. Do not take two doses at the same time.

### Can you take other medicines?

Some medicines available without a prescription may react with *azathioprine* including:

- trimethoprim

Tell your pharmacist or doctor about all medicines or treatments that you may be taking, including vitamins, herbal products (e.g. echinacea) or recreational drugs.

### What side effects might you notice?

Side Effects	Recommended action
Increased risk of infection - symptoms may include: fever, chills, sore throat, aches and pains, tiredness, pain when peeing, mouth ulcers Easy/unusual bruising or bleeding Severe stomach pain Symptoms of liver problems including: yellow skin or eyes, itching, dark urine, pale bowel motions, abdominal pain	Tell your doctor immediately
Skin rash	Tell your doctor
Vomiting, diarrhoea	Tell your doctor if troublesome
Nausea	Take with food

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

### Other information:

- Tell your doctor if you have kidney or liver problems, or if you have taken immunosuppressant medicines in the past.
- Tell your doctor if you have a long-term infection e.g. tuberculosis, HIV or hepatitis B or C.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.
- Before starting *azathioprine* you will need to have a blood test to check if *azathioprine* is suitable for you.
- You will need regular blood tests while taking *azathioprine* to check if it is causing problems with your liver or blood.
- Protect yourself from too much sunlight while taking immunosuppressant medicines (they may increase your risk of skin cancer). Always cover up and apply a thick layer of broad spectrum sunscreen (at least SPF30) when outside. Do not use sunbeds.
- You have an increased risk of getting an infection while taking *azathioprine*. Discuss with your doctor.
- *Azathioprine* affects your immune system. Before you start and while you are using it, check with your doctor what vaccines you might need. You should not have a live vaccine while using it.
- It is important to tell anyone who gives you medical or dental treatment that you are taking *azathioprine*.

***This leaflet contains important, but not all, information about this medicine.***

*Prepared by the PILs Committee at Christchurch Hospital, Canterbury District Health Board, New Zealand. September 2018*