

Azithromycin Information

This information leaflet is to give you information about the drug therapy **Azithromycin**.

Why have I been prescribed Azithromycin?

You have been prescribed Azithromycin in order to try and improve control of your bronchiectasis symptoms.

Azithromycin potentially works in two different ways:

- Firstly, it is an antibiotic and is capable of killing a number of the bugs (bacteria) that cause infections in bronchiectasis.
- Secondly, it appears to have a powerful anti-inflammatory effect in the airways and can significantly reduce the number of infections that patients get and help with symptoms such as cough, sputum production and breathlessness.

What dose do I take and what potential side effects are there?

Normally, patients take one capsule (250 mg strength) 3 times a week - usually Monday, Wednesday and Friday with weekends off.

Overall, **Azithromycin** is very well tolerated and about 90 % of patients are able to continue with this treatment without significant side effects.

About 10 % of patients cannot tolerate **Azithromycin** usually due to tummy upset, diarrhoea, constipation or development of a skin rash.

Azithromycin can also very occasionally upset the liver and we routinely ask your GP to check liver blood tests about 1 month after starting treatment to check for this.

Extremely rarely, **Azithromycin** can lead to hearing loss and the drug should be stopped immediately if this occurs and the hearing will usually then improve.

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

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 a patient on Azithromycin for 3 months (if the patient is tolerating it well) 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. A number of our patients have been on **Azithromycin** for several years.

Can Azithromycin interact with any of my other tablets?

Yes - **Azithromycin** can potentially interact with Theophylline tablets which are used to treat asthma by increasing the blood levels of this drug.

The trade names of this drug are:

- Uniphyllin**
- Slo-Phyllin**
- Neulin SA**
- Phyllocontin**

Azithromycin can also possibly interact with the blood thinning drug **Warfarin** and the heart drug **Digoxin** leading to increased blood levels of these drugs. If you are taking any of these drugs, you will require additional blood tests and the doses of these drugs may need to be adjusted.

Should Azithromycin be stopped for surgery?

You do not have to stop taking your tablets prior to surgery. If in doubt, check with your respiratory consultant and the consultant who is doing the surgery.

Does Azithromycin alter fertility or pregnancy?

Azithromycin has no known consequences for fertility. Its safety in pregnancy is not fully known and the manufacturers of the drug suggest only using it if there are no alternatives. We therefore, recommended effective contraception for women on **Azithromycin**.

Can I drink alcohol when taking Azithromycin?

Yes - there is no interaction with alcohol.