



Patient Information

Azithromycin prophylaxis

This leaflet is provided to support the prescriber in talking with the patient about key benefits and risks of azithromycin prophylaxis. This leaflet is not a guide to prescribing. For prescribing guidance see www.antibioticprescribing.ie

Azithromycin is an antibiotic. Azithromycin can be used for a few days to treat certain infections. Azithromycin can also be used for a long period (months) to help protect people with some types of lung disease. This leaflet is about long-term use of azithromycin for people with lung disease. This is called azithromycin prophylaxis.

Why have I been prescribed long-term azithromycin (azithromycin prophylaxis)?

- You have been prescribed long-term azithromycin to prevent chest infections and to improve your chest symptoms.
- Azithromycin does not work for everyone with lung disease but it may help you in two ways:
 1. It is an antibiotic and can kill some of the bugs (bacteria) that could cause chest infections.
 2. It can reduce inflammation in the airways so it can help to relieve cough, sputum production and breathlessness.

How long will I be on this medicine?

- Usually the plan is to take azithromycin for 6 to 12 months. This gives enough time for you and your doctor to see if it works for you. If you get less chest infections or you have less cough, sputum production and breathlessness, then it may be useful to stay on it for longer.

What are the common or important side effects?

- Most people have no troublesome side effects.
- Some people have tummy upset, feeling sick (nausea), getting sick (vomiting).
- Some people get light headedness, dizziness or fast heart rate (palpitations) and may need to get their ECG (heart tracing) checked.

- A small number of people get jaundice (yellow colour of the skin or whites of your eyes) or itching because of liver upset.
- A very small number of people get hearing problems (ringing in the ears or poor hearing).
- A very small number of people get poor balance (unsteady on their feet).
- Some people get diarrhoea caused by overgrowth of a bacteria known as C diff (*Clostridioides difficile*).
- **If you think azithromycin is causing you troublesome side effects at any time you should talk to your doctor. You may need to stop taking it.**

What dose do I take?

- Most people are given 500mg (two capsules or tablets) three times a week, usually Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
- Some people are given 250mg daily (one capsule or tablet).

Will azithromycin interfere with any other medicines that I am taking?

- Azithromycin can interfere with many other medicines and herbal remedies.
- Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any other medicines or herbal remedies before you start taking azithromycin.
- Tell your doctor or pharmacist before you start on any new medicines or herbal remedies while on azithromycin.

If you are prescribed another antibiotic, check with your doctor whether you should continue to take azithromycin.