

Patient Information

Azathioprine

Eye Unit

Why am I taking Azathioprine?

You have been given this drug to help your condition. It is not a painkiller and it does not work quickly but can help with your symptoms over a long period of time.

How does it work?

Azathioprine works by damping down inflammation. It does this by acting on certain cells in your immune system. It may take up to 2-3 months to make any improvement in your symptoms.

What dose should I take?

Azathioprine comes in two strengths, 25mg and 50mg. It is usually taken twice or three times a day with food. Your exact dose will depend on your condition and body weight and may be increased later if necessary.

Are there any side effects?

All drugs can have side effects, although most patients do not have any. Please tell your doctor if you get any of these:-

- Sickness (nausea)
- Diarrhoea
- Skin rashes

Sometimes Azathioprine can affect your blood and liver.

Do I need any special checks while I am on it?

Your doctor will arrange for you to have regular blood tests to check whether your blood or liver is being affected. You will have these tests most often during the first year of your treatment.

Can I take other medicines when I am on Azathioprine?

Some drugs can react with it. You should tell the doctor treating you that you are taking Azathioprine. You should not take 'over the counter' drugs without first checking with your doctor or pharmacist.

**Can I have immunisations while I am on Azathioprine?
You should avoid immunisation with live vaccines such as:-**

- Oral Polio
- Rubella (German Measles)
- Yellow Fever
- Oral Typhoid
- Tuberculosis

It is safe to have these immunisations:-

- Hepatitis
- Influenza
- Tetanus
- Pneumo-vaccine
- Meningo-vaccine
- Injected Polio
- Injected Typhoid

Is there anything else I should avoid?

Avoid being around people who have chickenpox or shingles especially if you have never had either of these illnesses. If you do get one of them, stop taking your Azathioprine and get medical advice.

Can I drink alcohol whilst I am on Azathioprine?

Yes in moderation. Moderate intake is considered to be 10 units a week at most. 1 unit equals ½ pint average strength beer, 1 glass wine, 1 measure of spirit.

Does Azathioprine affect fertility or pregnancy?

We advise all women of child-bearing age who are taking immunosuppressive treatments to avoid pregnancy as some drugs can increase the risk of birth defects and/or developmental problems. Men taking immunosuppressive treatments may also need to take precautions.

The most appropriate form of contraception depends on the medications you are taking so please ask us for advice. Please let us know if you wish to plan a family so that we can discuss treatment options with you.

If you experience problems related to the drug, contact your GP or Eye Department at the Royal Gwent Hospital.

Urgent Referral:- 01633 – 238856
8am – 6pm

**“This document is available in Welsh /
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**