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 chest 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 chest infections.
- Secondly, it has a powerful anti-inflammatory effect in the airways and can reduce the number of infections that you 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, people take one capsule (250 mg strength) 3 times a week – usually Monday, Wednesday and Friday. **Azithromycin** is very well tolerated and most people do not get any significant side effects.

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

Azithromycin can occasionally cause changes in your ECG (heart tracing). We will routinely check your ECG prior to starting the medication. You should inform your GP if you get any palpitations or chest pain while on this treatment.

Azithromycin can occasionally upset the liver. We will check your liver function before starting the drug

Extremely rarely, **Azithromycin** can lead to hearing loss. The drug should be stopped immediately if this occurs and the hearing will usually then improve. The first symptom of this can be ringing in the ears. If you experience this symptom the drug should be stopped immediately.

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 people on **Azithromycin** for 3-6 months before deciding if it is working, assuming that you do not have any side effects. If it reduces the number of infections that you suffer from and / or significantly reduces cough, sputum production or breathlessness, then we usually like to keep it going. Some people have been on **Azithromycin** for several years.

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Can Azithromycin interact with any of my other tablets?

Yes – **Azithromycin** can potentially interact with Theophylline tablets, which are used to treat airways diseases, by increasing the blood levels of this drug.
The trade names of this drug are **Uniphyllin, Slo-Phyllin, Neulin SA and 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.

What should I do if I suffer a flare up of my chest disease?

Although **Azithromycin** is an antibiotic, you may still need to take courses of antibiotics for flare ups/ chest infections in the usual way. You do not need to stop your **Azithromycin** when starting a course of antibiotics. If you require a course of antibiotics, similar antibiotics to **Azithromycin** (Erythromycin, Clarythromycin) should be avoided as these are unlikely to be effective.

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.

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Secretary to the Consultant
Respiratory Department Huddersfield Royal Infirmary
Telephone No: 01484 355581
www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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