

AZATHIOPRINE

This is a type of medicine called an immunosuppressant. It helps to calm or control your body's immune system.

It is used to treat inflammatory conditions such as:

- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis
- Severe inflammation of the liver, skin or arteries
- Some blood disorders
- Lupus
- Atopic eczema

This medication is initiated by a Specialist before prescribing is taken over by the GP under a Shared Care Agreement once the titration of the medication is stable.

Monitoring

When your medication is prescribed by the GP, you will be required to have regular blood test monitoring, to ensure their optimum safety.

These blood tests are every 12 weeks and are comprised of a Full Blood Count (FBC), a Liver Function Test (LFT) and a Kidney Function Test (U&E).

Side Effects

Please STOP the medication and speak to your Specialist or Doctor immediately or call 111, if these symptoms occur or persist:

- Feeling tired all the time, dizzy or sick, or you're vomiting or have diarrhoea
- High temperature with shivering or chills, cough or a sore throat
- Joints or muscles are hurting more than you would expect with your condition
- Your pee changes colour or you start peeing more or less than usual – this can be a sign of kidney problems
- Feeling confused, light-headed or weak – these can be signs of low blood pressure
- Bleeding or bruising more easily than usual
- You notice lumps anywhere on your body
- Severe stomach ache (abdominal pain) and back pain

Cautions:

Protect your skin from sunlight:

- Your skin may be more sensitive to the sun while you're taking azathioprine.
- Stay out of bright sun and use a high factor sun cream (SPF 30 or above) even on cloudy days.
- Do not use a sun lamp or sun beds.
- It's best not to drink too much alcohol, as azathioprine and alcohol can both affect your liver.

Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

Speak to your Doctor or Specialist if you are planning a pregnancy or become pregnant whilst taking Azathioprine.

Azathioprine can be taken during pregnancy.

However, if your baby is unwell, speak to a doctor, your midwife or health visitor for advice. It's important to tell them that you took azathioprine during pregnancy, as azathioprine affects the immune system, it means that after your baby is born, there's a very small risk it can affect the way they fight infections.

Azathioprine can be taken if you are breastfeeding if your doctor, health visitor or midwife says your baby is healthy.

Talk to your health visitor, midwife, doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible if you have any concerns about your baby. This includes:

- not feeding as well as usual
- getting frequent infections