

Azithromycin

Why is this medication prescribed?

Azithromycin is an antibiotic (macrolide-type) used to treat a wide variety of bacterial infections. It works by stopping the growth of bacteria.

Azithromycin is used to treat many different types of infections caused by bacteria, such as respiratory infections, skin infections, ear infections, and sexually transmitted diseases.

How should this medicine be used?

Take this medication by mouth with or without food, usually once a day, or as directed by your doctor. You may take this medication with food if stomach upset occurs.

Antibiotics work best when the amount of medicine in your body is kept at a constant level. Therefore, take this drug at the same time each day.

Continue to take this medication until the full prescribed amount is finished even if symptoms disappear after a few days. Stopping the medication too early may allow bacteria to continue to grow, which may result in a relapse of the infection.

Antacids may decrease the absorption of azithromycin. If you take an antacid, wait at least 2 hours after taking this medication.

What special precautions should I follow?

Before taking azithromycin, tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are allergic to it; or to other macrolide antibiotics such as erythromycin or clarithromycin; or to ketolide antibiotics such as telithromycin; or if you have any other allergies.

Before using this medication, tell your doctor or pharmacist your medical history, especially of: liver disease, kidney disease.

Azithromycin may cause a condition that affects the heart rhythm (QT prolongation). QT prolongation can infrequently result in serious (rarely fatal) fast/irregular heartbeat and other symptoms (such as severe dizziness, fainting) that require immediate medical attention. The risk of QT prolongation may be increased if you have certain medical conditions or are taking other drugs that may affect the heart rhythm. Before using azithromycin, tell your doctor or pharmacist if you have any of the following conditions: certain heart problems (heart failure, slow heartbeat, QT prolongation in the EKG), family history of certain heart problems (QT prolongation in the EKG, sudden cardiac death).

Low levels of potassium or magnesium in the blood may also increase your risk of QT prolongation. This risk may increase if you use certain drugs (such as diuretics/"water pills") or if you have conditions such as severe sweating, diarrhea, or vomiting.

What special dietary instructions should I follow?

Take azithromycin on an empty stomach 1 hour before or 2 hours after meals.

Do not take azithromycin at the same time as taking an antacid that contains aluminum or magnesium.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

If you miss a dose, use it as soon as you remember. If it is near the time of the next dose, skip the missed dose and resume your usual dosing schedule. Do not double the dose to catch up.

What side effects can this medication cause?

Get emergency medical help if you have any of these signs of an allergic reaction: hives; difficulty breathing; swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Stop using azithromycin and call your doctor at once if you have any of these serious side effects:

- diarrhea that is watery or bloody;
- chest pain, uneven heartbeats; or
- nausea, stomach pain, low fever, loss of appetite, dark urine, clay-colored stools, jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes).

Continue using azithromycin and talk with your doctor if you have any of these less serious side effects:

- mild nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, or stomach pain;
- dizziness, tired feeling, or headache;
- vaginal itching or discharge; or
- mild itching or skin rash.

What storage conditions are needed for this medicine?

Store at room temperature between 15-30 degrees C away from light and moisture.

In case of emergency/overdose:

If overdose is suspected, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

What other information should I know?

Do not use azithromycin if you have ever had an allergic reaction to this medicine or similar drugs such as erythromycin, clarithromycin or other macrolide antibiotics.

There are many other medicines that can interact with azithromycin. Tell your doctor about all the prescription and over-the-counter medications you use. This includes vitamins, minerals, herbal products, and drugs prescribed by other doctors. Do not start using a new medication without telling your doctor. Keep a list with you of all the medicines you use and show this list to any doctor or other healthcare provider who treats you.

Take this medication for the entire length of time prescribed by your doctor. Your symptoms may get better before the infection is completely treated. Azithromycin will not treat a viral infection such as the common cold or flu.