

# AZITHROMYCIN

**Other names: Zithromax™**

## **WHY is this drug prescribed?**

Azithromycin is an anti-infective drug (antibiotic) that is used to prevent or treat *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infection. Azithromycin may also be used to treat other types of infections such as bacterial pneumonia, toxoplasmosis, and sexually transmitted diseases (ie. chlamydia).

## **HOW should this drug be taken?**

Depending on the type of infection you have, the dose of azithromycin will vary. For example, when used to **prevent MAC** the usual dose of azithromycin is 1200 mg orally taken once weekly. Other doses may also be prescribed.

When used in combination with other drugs for the **treatment of MAC**, the usual dose is 500 mg daily.

For bacterial pneumonias, the medication is prescribed for 5 days, and for chlamydia, it is administered as a single 1 gram dose.

Azithromycin is available as a 250 mg or 600 mg tablet. It is also available as an oral suspension.

Your dosage is:

250 mg tablet  
600 mg tablet

\_\_\_\_ tablet(s) (\_\_\_\_mg) once a day  
\_\_\_\_ day(s) a week

or

20 mg / mL oral suspension  
40 mg / mL oral suspension

\_\_\_\_ mL (\_\_\_\_mg) once a day  
\_\_\_\_ day(s) a week

The azithromycin tablets can be taken with or without food. However, the azithromycin oral suspension should be taken 1 hour before or 2 hours after a meal. The azithromycin oral suspension bottle should be well shaken before each dose.

Take azithromycin for the duration of time it is prescribed. If you stop it earlier, your infection may come back. If the infection worsens or persists, consult your doctor.

## **What should you do if you FORGET a dose?**

If you miss a dose of azithromycin, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is time for your next dose, do not double

the dose, just carry on with your regular schedule.

## **What ADVERSE EFFECTS can this drug cause? What should you do about them?**

Azithromycin is usually well tolerated. At the higher doses, it may cause **diarrhea, nausea and vomiting**. If you experience any of these adverse effects and they are bothersome, please talk to your doctor or pharmacist. They can suggest ways of managing these adverse effects.

Rarely, **temporary hearing disruptions** (fullness of the ears, decreased hearing, ringing of the ears), **rash** and other allergic reactions have been reported. If these symptoms occur, please contact your doctor or pharmacist.

Rarely, **increases in your liver enzymes**, a sign that indicates liver damage, can present itself. If you have to take azithromycin for a long period of time, your doctor will check your blood for changes in your liver enzymes.

**It is important that you keep your doctor appointments and come for your laboratory tests so that your progress can be followed.**

**What other PRECAUTIONS should you follow while using this drug?**

This medication is usually safe when taken with most other medications. However, inform your doctor and pharmacist of all prescribed and non-prescribed drugs you are taking. As well, you should inform them of natural products you are taking. If you wish to start a new drug or natural product, please consult with your pharmacist before doing so.

Drugs that may influence the effect of azithromycin include **aluminum and magnesium-containing antacids and drugs** [ie. Amphogel®, Diovol®, Maalox®]. **If you need to take these drugs, they should be taken 1 hour before or 2 hours after azithromycin.**

If you have a history of liver disease (cirrhosis, hepatitis), please notify your doctor prior to taking this medication.

**If you have a history of allergies to either erythromycin or clarithromycin, please notify your doctor prior to taking azithromycin.**

**How should this drug be STORED?**

Azithromycin tablets should be stored in a cool (15-30°C) dry place, protected from light and well out of the reach of children. The azithromycin oral

suspension should be kept between 5 to 30°C. The suspension is good for 10 days after it is prepared. Ensure that the drug has not expired by checking the expiry date (“EXP”) shown on the outside of the package.

Do not store in your bathroom. Heat and moisture may cause the drug to be less active.

**If you have any questions or concerns about this drug or if you are experiencing adverse effects, please discuss them with your pharmacist, doctor or nurse.**

**Write questions or concerns down to ensure they are addressed.**

The following pharmacist is available to answer questions:

**Pharmacist:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

Reference: Product Monograph. Zithromax™ (azithromycin). Kirkland, Qc, Canada: Pfizer Canada Inc., 2007. Prepared by the Ontario HIV Pharmacy Professional Specialty Group, 2003. Reviewed 2009.

Additional medication fact sheets and updates may be found at: [www.hivclinic.ca](http://www.hivclinic.ca).

***AZITHROMYCIN***

***MEDICATION***

***FACT SHEET***