

## **About your medicine**

Your doctor has prescribed azathioprine for you:

### **What is this medicine used for?**

This medicine belongs to a group of medicines known as immunosuppressive agents. It works by decreasing your immune system's response and thus helps to reduce the inflammation in the skin. In immune-mediated blistering skin conditions such as pemphigus and bullous pemphigoid, they are used to reduce the antibodies in the blood which are attacking the skin.

### **How should I take this medicine?**

Take each dose with a full glass of water.

Take this medicine with food to prevent stomach upset.

If you feel that the medicine is not working well, do not take more than the prescribed dose. Consult your doctor.

### **What should I do if I forget a dose?**

If you are directed by your doctor to take this medicine regularly, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose.

Do not double the next dose to make up for the missed dose.

### **What possible side effects may it cause?**

Certain side effects of this medicine are not unusual and may even disappear during treatment. If any of the following effects persist or are severe, consult your doctor.

- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhoea

The side effects of azathioprine include increased susceptibility to infections, suppression of the bone marrow and, less commonly, liver toxicity. Your doctor will perform regular blood monitoring (full blood count and liver function test) to watch out for complications. More frequent monitoring is required during the initial weeks of therapy.

Consult your doctor as soon as possible if any of these additional effects occur, as they may indicate more serious side effects:

- Allergic reaction (difficulty breathing; swelling of your lips, tongue, or face; or hives)
- Unusual tiredness or weakness
- Cough, sore throat, fever especially if prolonged, or chills
- Stomach pain
- Joint or muscle pain
- Painful urination
- Yellowing of eyes or skin
- Pale stools or darkened urine
- Unusual bleeding or bruising
- Unusual lumps or growths on the skin

### **What precautions should I take?**

- *Inform your doctor if you have liver or kidney disease; blood disorders; any infection; any allergies.*
- *For women: Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are breast-feeding. Azathioprine should not be taken during pregnancy or while you are breast-feeding.*
- *For men: It is not known whether azathioprine taken by a man will harm an unborn baby at the time of conception. The use of reliable form(s) of birth control is recommended during treatment with this drug and for at least 3 months after stopping treatment.*
- *Avoid taking allopurinol (a drug commonly given for gout) while you are on azathioprine as allopurinol may interfere with removal of azathioprine from the body, hence, the side effects of azathioprine may be increased. Inform your doctor if you are taking other medication, especially, captopril, ciclosporin, co-trimoxazole (Bactrim<sup>®</sup>), cyclophosphamide, chlorambucil, lisinopril, and trimethoprim. The effect of warfarin may be possibly reduced.*
- *Inform your doctor if you are taking over-the-counter medicines, including vitamins, minerals, and herbal products.*
- *As mentioned above, this medicine can increase your risk of developing an infection. Inform your doctor at the first sign of a possible infection (fever, persistent sore throat). If you seek treatment from a family doctor, please inform them that you are taking this drug. Be careful also when cleaning your gums or teeth. Dental work, whenever possible, should be completed prior to beginning this medicine.*
- *Do not get any immunizations (vaccinations) without your doctor's approval while you are being treated with azathioprine and after you stop treatment with it as azathioprine lowers your body's resistance to infections.*
- *Keep to your appointments regularly so that your doctor can monitor your response and adjust your treatment accordingly*
- *Do not allow anyone else to take this medication.*

### **How do I store this medicine?**

- *Keep this medicine away from heat and direct sunlight in a cool, dry place, out of reach of children*
- *Do not keep this medicine with other medications in the same container. Keep each medicine separately in labeled containers.*

*When in doubt, consult your doctor or pharmacist:*  
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1 Mandalay Road, Singapore 308205.  
Tel: 63508454