

Azathioprine for Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) (Imuran®)

Reason for prescribing

Azathioprine is a medicine used to treat Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). It helps the immune system, which is thought to be hyperactive in patients with IBD. This drug is also used to prevent rejection after an organ transplant. Brand name: Imuran.

Description of the medicine

- This medicine comes as a tablet that is given by mouth (oral). The tablets have no bitter or bad taste.
- Some pharmacies can make a liquid form of this medicine. Have your pharmacy call the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin (CHW) pharmacy if they have questions.

How and when to give the medicine

Your child's doctor or nurse will explain how and when to give this medicine to your child. Be sure to ask any questions that you have.

- Do not let anyone else take this medicine.
- This medicine is normally given at bedtime unless the child's doctor tells you otherwise.

Special advice for giving this medicine with food

- This medicine must be given on an empty stomach. Give your child this medicine at least two hours after a meal.
- After taking this medicine, your child should **not** drink:
 - Milk or eat milk-based products such as yogurt, ice cream, or cheese for at least 30 minutes.
 - Acidic liquids such as orange juice for at least 30 minutes.

Possible side effects

If your child has these or other side effects, tell the doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

Common side effects	Rare side effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nausea, vomiting• Loss of appetite• Diarrhea• Mouth sores	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Swelling of the pancreas. This is also known as pancreatitis.• Bone marrow slow down. This can increase the risk for serious infections• Problems with liver functions

Side effects (continued)

This medicine may:

- Lower the white blood cell count (WBC).
- Cause your child's urine to change color.
- Cause your child to be sleepy or dizzy. Your child should be careful when doing activities that require quick reactions such as climbing stairs or riding a bike. Have your child get up slowly after lying down to avoid being dizzy.

Special information

General information:

- The full effect of this medicine on the immune system is seen after 3-4 months. Close laboratory monitoring is needed, particularly in the first 3 months.
- Be sure to give each dose of medicine to your child as the doctor or nurse has ordered.
- If you forget to give your child the medicine, give the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is time to give the next dose, skip the missed dose and get back on the usual schedule. Do not give two doses at the same time to your child.

Storage, refills and when to throw away:

- **Keep this medicine out of the reach of children.**
- Do not give this medicine to your child after the expiration date shown on the bottle label. Any unused or expired medicine should be brought to the Pharmacy at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin or placed in a container labeled for chemotherapy disposal.

ALERT: Long-term use of Azathioprine increases the risk of lymphoma, a type of cancer. Your child should be closely monitored while taking this medicine. Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child:

- Has upper abdominal pain with nausea or vomiting. This could be a sign of pancreatitis, which is an allergic reaction. It may occur 10 to 21 days after starting the medicine.
- Has unusual bleeding or bruising.
- Gets pregnant while on this medicine.
- Is vomiting and is not able to keep the medicine in their stomach.
- Has a fever of 101.2° F (38.5° C) or higher for more than two days. Call if the fever is not relieved by over-the-counter fever reducer medicine.
- Has dark yellow urine or yellow skin or eyes.
- Has symptoms of the illness that get worse or do not improve.
- Has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.