



Azithromycin for bacterial infections

This leaflet is for parents and carers about how to use this medicine in children. Our information sometimes differs from that provided by the manufacturers, because their information is usually aimed at adults. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

If your child has ever had a reaction to any medicine, tell your doctor **before giving** azithromycin.

Name of medicine

Azithromycin

Brand name: Zithromax®

Why is it important for my child to take this medicine?

It is important that your child takes this medicine in the way that your doctor has told you to so that it kills the bacteria and gets rid of the infection.

What is azithromycin available as?


- **Tablets:** 250 mg, 500 mg
- **Capsules:** 250 mg
- **Liquid medicine (suspension):** 200 mg in 5 mL; some may contain a small amount of sugar

When should I give azithromycin?

Azithromycin is usually given **once** a day. This is usually in the morning. Give the medicine at about the same time(s) each day so that this becomes part of your child's daily routine, which will help you to remember.

How much should I give?

Your doctor will work out the amount of azithromycin (the dose) that is right for *your* child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label.

 **It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions about how much to give.**

How should I give it?

Azithromycin tablets and liquid can be taken with or without food but the capsules should be taken an hour before food or two hours after food.



Tablets and capsules should be swallowed with a glass of water or juice.

Your child should not chew the tablets or capsules.



Liquid medicine: Shake the bottle well and measure out the right amount using an oral syringe or medicine spoon. You can get these from your pharmacist. Do not use a kitchen teaspoon as it will not give the right amount.

When should the medicine start working?

The medicine will start working straight away and your child should start to get better after taking the medicine for 2 days. It is important that they take the whole course of medicine that has been prescribed. **Do not stop early.**

What if my child is sick (vomits)?

- If your child is sick less than 30 minutes after having a dose of azithromycin, give them the same dose again.
- If your child is sick more than 30 minutes after having a dose of azithromycin, you **do not** need to give them another dose. Wait until the next normal dose.

If your child is sick again, seek advice from your doctor, pharmacist or hospital.

What if I forget to give it?

Give the missed dose when you remember during the day, as long as this is at least 12 hours before the next dose is due.


What if I give too much?

You are unlikely to cause harm if you give an extra dose of azithromycin by mistake. If you think you may have given your child too much azithromycin, contact your doctor or local NHS services (details at end of leaflet). Have the medicine or packaging with you if you telephone for advice.

Are there any possible side-effects?

We use medicines to make our children better, but sometimes they have other effects that we don't want (side-effects).

Side-effects that you must do something about

 If your child is short of breath or is wheezing, or their face, lips or tongue start to swell, or they develop a rash, they may be allergic to azithromycin. Take your child to hospital or call an ambulance straight away.

Other side-effects you need to know about

- Your child may get diarrhoea or stomach pains and may feel sick (nausea) or be sick (vomit) when they first start taking azithromycin. Giving the medicine with some food or milk may help (tablets and liquid only - not capsules).
- Contact your doctor or local NHS services (details at end of leaflet) or take your child to hospital if they:
 - » have diarrhoea that lasts for more than 4 days or it is severe, watery or contains blood.
 - » are drowsy, floppy or do not respond.
- **Do not** give your child any medicine to stop the diarrhoea, unless your doctor has told you to.
- Your child may have a mild skin rash or itching.
- Your child may get headaches when taking azithromycin and they may feel sleepy or say they have a funny taste in their mouth. These side-effects usually go once they stop taking the medicine.

Important things to know about taking antibiotics

- It is important that your child completes the course of antibiotic. This means that they must take the medicine for the number of days that the doctor has told them to, or until all the medicine has been taken.
- If you stop giving the antibiotic too soon, the bacteria that are left may start to multiply again, and may cause another infection.
- In the past, doctors may have prescribed antibiotics for many types of infection. However, this practice is now changing with the growing concern about the risk of antibiotic resistance.
- Bacteria that become “resistant” to a common antibiotic are no longer killed by it, and infections may become harder to treat. It is therefore important that antibiotics are used only when needed.

- Many common illnesses, such as sore throats, colds, coughs and flu, are caused by viruses. Antibiotics do not kill viruses. Your doctor will not prescribe antibiotics for these illnesses.
- Try to give the antibiotic at about the same times each day, to help you remember, and to make sure that there is the right amount of medicine in your child’s body to kill the bacteria.
- Only give this medicine to your child for their current infection. **Never save** medicine for future illnesses. Give old/unused antibiotics to your pharmacist to dispose of.
- Only give the antibiotic to the child it was prescribed for. Never give it to anyone else, even if their condition appears to be the same, as it could do harm.



If you think someone else may have taken the medicine by accident, contact your doctor for advice.

There may sometimes be other side-effects that are not listed above. If you notice anything unusual and are concerned, contact your doctor.

You can report any suspected side-effects to a UK safety scheme at www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard

Can other medicines be given at the same time as azithromycin?

- You can give your child medicines that contain paracetamol or ibuprofen, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Azithromycin should not be taken with some medicines. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about any other medicines that your child is taking **before** giving azithromycin.
- If your child takes medicines for indigestion (antacids), give these at a different time of day from azithromycin. Leave a gap of at least 2 hours between giving azithromycin and the indigestion medicines.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist **before** giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal or complementary medicines.

- Azithromycin tablets and liquid can be taken with or without food but the capsules should be taken an hour before food or two hours after food.

Where should I keep this medicine?

- Keep the medicine in a cupboard, away from heat and direct sunlight.
- You may need to keep liquid medicine in the fridge – check the instructions on the bottle. Make sure that the medicine doesn’t freeze.
- Make sure that children cannot see or reach the medicine.
- Keep the medicine in the container it came in.

Who to contact for more information

Your child’s doctor, pharmacist or nurse will be able to give you more information about azithromycin and about other medicines used to treat bacterial infections.

You can also get useful information from:

England: NHS 111
Tel 111 www.nhs.uk

Scotland: NHS 24
Tel 111 www.nhs24.scot

Wales: NHS Direct
Tel 0845 46 47 (2p per minute) or 111 (free)
www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

Northern Ireland: NI Direct
www.nidirect.gov.uk

Is there anything else I need to know about this medicine?

- Azithromycin is a type of antibiotic called a macrolide. Your child should not have azithromycin if they are allergic to any macrolide antibiotics (for example, erythromycin or clarithromycin).
- If your child has ever had an allergic reaction or any other type of reaction to a medicine, tell your doctor **before** giving azithromycin.

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk



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The primary source for the information in this leaflet is the British National Formulary for Children. For details on any other sources used for this leaflet, please contact us through our website, www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk. We take great care to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct and up-to-date. However, medicines can be used in different ways for different patients. It is important that you ask the advice of your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure about something. This leaflet is about the use of these medicines in the UK, and may not apply to other countries. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), the Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG), WellChild and the contributors and editors cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of information, omissions of information, or any actions that may be taken as a consequence of reading this leaflet.