

Azithromycin
(az ith roe mye' sin)

Why is this medication prescribed?

Azithromycin is used to treat certain infections caused by bacteria, such as bronchitis; pneumonia; sexually transmitted diseases (STD); and infections of the ears, lungs, skin, and throat. Azithromycin is in a class of medications called macrolide antibiotics. It works by stopping the growth of bacteria. Antibiotics will not work for colds, flu, or other viral infections.

How should this medicine be used?

Azithromycin comes as a tablet and oral suspension (liquid) to take by mouth. It is usually taken with or without food once a day for 1-5 days. To help you remember to take azithromycin, take it around the same time every day. Follow the directions on your prescription label carefully, and ask your clinician to explain any part you do not understand. Take azithromycin exactly as directed. Do not take more or less of it or take it more often than prescribed by your clinician. The tablets should be taken with a full glass of water. Take azithromycin until you finish the prescription, even if you feel better. Stopping azithromycin too soon may cause bacteria to become resistant to antibiotics.

Other uses for this medicine:

Azithromycin is also used sometimes to treat *H. pylori* infection, early Lyme disease, and other infections. It is also used sometimes to prevent heart infection in patients having dental or other procedures and to prevent STD in victims of sexual assault. Talk to your clinician about the possible risks of using this medication for your condition. This medication may be prescribed for other uses; ask your clinician for more information.

What special precautions should I follow?

Before taking azithromycin,

- tell your clinician if you are allergic to azithromycin, clarithromycin (Biaxin), dirithromycin (Dynabac), erythromycin (E.E.S., E-Mycin, Erythrocin), or any other medications.
- tell your clinician what prescription and nonprescription medications, vitamins, nutritional supplements, and herbal products you are taking. Be sure to mention any of the following: anticoagulants ('blood thinners') such as warfarin (Coumadin); cyclosporine (Neoral, Sandimmune); digoxin (Lanoxin); dihydroergotamine (D.H.E. 45, Migranal); ergotamine (Ergomar); medications that suppress the immune system; nelfinavir (Viracept); phenytoin (Dilantin); and terfenadine (Seldane). Your clinician may need to change the doses of your medications or monitor you carefully for side effects.
- if you take antacids (Mylanta, Maalox), take them 2 hours before or 4 hours after azithromycin.
- tell your clinician if you have or have ever had cystic fibrosis, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), irregular heartbeat, or kidney or liver disease..
- tell your clinician if you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are breast-feeding. If you become pregnant while taking azithromycin, call your clinic.

What special dietary instructions should I follow?

Unless your clinician tells you otherwise, continue your normal diet.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.

What side effects can this medication cause?

Azithromycin may cause side effects. Tell your clinician if any of these symptoms are severe or do not go away:

- upset stomach
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- stomach pain
- mild skin rash

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Some side effects can be serious. The following symptoms are uncommon, but if you experience any of them, call your clinician immediately:

- severe skin rash
- hives
- itching
- difficulty breathing or swallowing
- swelling of the face, throat, tongue, lips, eyes, hands, feet, ankles, or lower legs
- hoarseness
- yellowing of the skin or eyes
- rapid, pounding, or irregular heartbeat

Azithromycin may cause other side effects. Call your clinician if you have any unusual problems while taking this medication. If you experience a serious side effect, you or your clinician may send a report to the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting program online [at <http://www.fda.gov/MedWatch/report.htm>] or by phone [1-800-332-1088].

What storage conditions are needed for this medicine?

Keep this medication in the container it came in, tightly closed, and out of reach of children. Store the tablets at room temperature and away from excess heat and moisture (not in the bathroom). Throw away any medication that is outdated or no longer needed. Keep liquid medicine tightly closed at room temperature or in the refrigerator, and throw away any unused medication after 10 days. Do not freeze. Talk to your pharmacist about the proper disposal of your medication.

In case of emergency/overdose:

In case of overdose, call your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call local emergency services at 911.

What other information should I know?

Keep all follow up appointments. Do not let anyone else take your medication. Your prescription is probably not refillable. If you still have symptoms of infection after you finish the azithromycin, call your clinic.

Brand name(s):

- Zithromax®
- Zithromax® Single Dose Packets
- Zithromax® Tri-Paks®
- Zithromax® Z-Pak®



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