Ontario Renal Network

Azathioprine

Information For Patient With Glomerulonephritis

Generic Name	Brand Name
Azathioprine (AY-za-THYE-oh-preen)	Imuran®

What is Azathioprine and why is it being recommended for me?

- Azathioprine is used to control diseases of the immune system such as glomerulonephritis (inflammation of the kidneys) or vasculitis (inflammation of the blood vessels).
- It works by lowering your immune system.
- It can reduce the leakage of protein from your kidneys into the urine.

How should I take Azathioprine?

- The number of Azathioprine pills can change so make sure you are taking the correct dose.
- Azathioprine should be taken once daily.
- Take Azathioprine with or without food, but be consistent. If you take it with food one day, do the same the next day. Take with food, if it causes upset stomach.
- If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. But, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the dose you missed and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not take 2 doses at the same time.

What else do I need to know before taking Azathioprine?

- **Do not** take ALLOPURINOL (Zyloprim®) or FEBUXOSTAT (Uloric®), medications for gout, while taking Azathioprine. Taking these medications together can cause a severe lowering of your white blood cells, which are needed to help fight infections, or cause more side effects from Azathioprine therapy.
- Always contact the clinic before starting any new prescription and/or nonprescription medications (including vitamins and herbal products).
- Contact the clinic before receiving any vaccines. Azathioprine may increase your chance of an infection and/or make the vaccine not work as well.

What monitoring will I need?

- The clinic will order regular blood tests and 24 hour urine collections to check your response to Azathioprine and to monitor for side effects.

What are the possible side effects of Azathioprine?

- All medications may cause side effects; however, many people only experience mild side effects or none at all. Contact the clinic if you have any concerns about the following possible side effects:

Side effects and what to do

	Side Effects
Most Common (10-20% of people experience)	**Stomach upset, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea** • This may improve as your body gets used to Azathioprine. • Taking Azathioprine with food may help.
	Lower blood cell counts (red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets) • The clinic will monitor your blood cell counts.
Less Common (less than 10% of people experience)	**Increased risk of infection** • Azathioprine lowers your body's ability to fight infection. • Avoid close contact with people who have an infection, a cold or the flu. • Wash your hands with soap often and/or use hand sanitizer. • Report any signs and symptoms of infection (such as fever, chills, bad sore throat, pain with urinating, etc.) to your doctor immediately. • Warts—if this occurs, please contact your doctor as soon as possible.
Rare (less than 1% of people experience)	**Rash** • Let your doctor know if you experience this side effect.
	Yellowing of the skin or eyes (jaundice) or stomach pain • This may be due to effects on the liver or pancreas. • The clinic will monitor your liver function tests. • Report any signs of jaundice or stomach pain to your doctor immediately.
	Cancer • Azathioprine may increase your risk of cancer. • This risk is present with most medications that can decrease your immune system. • Avoid sunlamps and tanning beds. • Use sunscreen and wear clothing and eyewear that protect you from the sun.

Questions? Contact the Clinic at: _____

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