

# Azathioprine

## for Inflammatory Bowel Disease



(Purinethol®)

### Reason for prescribing

**Azathioprine** is used to treat Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). It helps the immune system, which is thought to be hyperactive in patients with IBD. At much higher doses, this medicine is used in some cancer treatments. Brand name: Purinethol.

### Description of the medicine

- This medicine comes as a tablet that is given by mouth (oral).

### 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:
  - Acidic liquids such as orange juice for at least 30 minutes.
  - Milk or eat milk-based products such as yogurt, ice cream, or cheese 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	Less-common side effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nausea, vomiting</li><li>• Loss of appetite</li><li>• Diarrhea</li><li>• Mouth sores</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Swelling of the pancreas. This is also known as pancreatitis.</li><li>• Bone marrow slow down. This can increase the risk for serious infections</li><li>• Problems with liver function</li></ul>

This medicine may:

- Lower the white blood cell count (WBC).
- Increase liver enzymes in the blood stream

## Special information

### General information:

- The full effect of this medicine on the immune system will take up to 3 months. Your child will have many lab tests done during this time, especially in the first 3 months.
- Be sure to give each dose of medicine to your child as the doctor or nurse has instructed.
- 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 your child two doses at the same time.

### 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 on the bottle label. Any unused or expired medicine should be brought to the Pharmacy at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin or put in a container labeled for chemotherapy disposal.

**ALERT:** Long-term use of Azathioprine increases the risk of lymphoma, a type of cancer. Your child will be closely monitored while taking this medicine by your health care team. 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 sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.**