

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center

Medication Information Sheet for Azathioprine and 6-MP

Brand Names: Imuran, Purinethol, Azasan

Generic Names: Azathioprine and 6-mercaptopurine (6MP)

Drug Class: Immunosuppressants

What do these medications do?

Used for the treatment of inflammatory bowel disease by inhibiting (suppressing) the activity of the immune system. These related medications work by decreasing inflammation, which is an underlying problem in both ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease.

Possible Side Effects:

These medications can temporarily lower the number of your white blood cells, which can put you at risk for developing infections. They can also decrease the numbers of platelets, which are necessary for proper clotting. If they become too low, we may adjust the dose or temporarily stop the medication. Therefore, it is important to follow your doctor's guidelines for laboratory testing. You will also need blood work to check your liver function. Generally, a complete blood count is drawn weekly for two weeks, then every two weeks for one month and then once monthly. Please call the office after getting your labs done during the initiation of the medicine. Side effects lessen and/or disappear with decrease of dosage.

These medications may cause:

- Nausea, vomiting, rash, fever, joint pain and/or diarrhea

Call your doctor *immediately* if you have any of these side effects:

- Unusual bleeding or bruising
- Fever or other signs of infection
- Sore throat
- Mouth sores
- Skin rash
- Abdominal pain
- Jaundice, pale (clay) colored stools or dark (tea) colored urine

Pancreatitis may occur in approximately 5% of patients within the first month. Pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas which can cause nausea, vomiting and/or abdominal pain. It reverses once the medication is stopped. Lymphoma has been reported in people taking these medications, however, it is very rare.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding: These medications should be avoided in these instances.

Dosage and Administration:

- These medications may be taken with food
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember
- Please notify us if you take any of these medications:
 - ACE inhibitors (Lisinopril, Enalapril, Vasotec, Monopril, Uniretic, Zestoretic)
 - Allopurinol (Zyloprim)
 - Cyclosporin
 - Methotrexate
 - Anticoagulants (Coumadin, Heparin, Lovenox, Plavix)
 - Neuromuscular blockers (Tubocurarine, Pancuronium, Pavalon)