

SUMMARY OF PRODUCT CHARACTERISTICS

1. NAME OF THE MEDICINAL PRODUCT

Azithromycin 500 mg Film-Coated Tablets

2. QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE COMPOSITION

Each tablet contains 500 mg azithromycin (as dihydrate).

For the full list of excipients, see section 6.1.

3. PHARMACEUTICAL FORM

Film-coated tablet.

Pale blue, oblong, biconvex film-coated tablet with imprint "AI 500" and score line on one side. The tablet can be divided into equal halves.

4. CLINICAL PARTICULARS

4.1 Therapeutic indications

Azithromycin is indicated for the following bacterial infections induced by micro-organisms susceptible to azithromycin (see sections 4.4 and 5.1):

- Infections of the lower respiratory tract: acute bronchitis and mild to moderate community-acquired pneumonia
- Infections of the upper respiratory tract: sinusitis and pharyngitis/tonsillitis
- Acute otitis media
- Infections of the skin and soft tissues of mild to moderate severity e.g. folliculitis, cellulitis, erysipelas
- Uncomplicated *Chlamydia trachomatis* urethritis and cervicitis

Consideration should be given to official guidance on the appropriate use of antibacterial agents.

Azithromycin is not the first choice for the empirical treatment of infections in areas where the prevalence of resistant isolates is 10% or more (see section 5.1).

4.2 Posology and method of administration

Posology

The duration of treatment in each of the infectious diseases is given below.

Paediatric population over 45 kg body weight, adults

The total dosage of azithromycin is 1500 mg which is spread over three days (500 mg once daily). Alternatively, the dosage can be spread over five days (500 mg as a single dose on the first day and thereafter 250 mg once daily).

In uncomplicated *Chlamydia trachomatis* urethritis and cervicitis the dosage is 1000 mg as a single oral dose.

For sinusitis, treatment is aimed at adults and adolescents over 16 years of age.

Paediatric population under 45 kg body weight

Tablets are not indicated for these patients. Other pharmaceutical forms of azithromycin, e.g. suspensions may be used.

Elderly

The same dosage as recommended for adult patients is used in the elderly. Since elderly can be patients with ongoing proarrhythmic conditions a particular caution is recommended due to the risk of developing cardiac arrhythmia and torsades de pointes (see section 4.4).

Patients with renal impairment

No dose adjustment is necessary in patients with mild to moderate renal impairment (GFR 10-80 ml/min) (see section 4.4).

Patients with hepatic impairment

A dose adjustment is not necessary for patients with mild to moderately impaired liver function (Child-Pugh class A or B) (see section 4.4).

Method of administration

Azithromycin film-coated tablets should be administered as a daily single dose. The tablets can be taken independently of meals.

4.3 Contraindications

Hypersensitivity to the active substance, erythromycin, any macrolide or ketolide antibiotic, or to any of the excipients listed in section 6.1.

4.4 Special warnings and precautions for use

Allergic reactions

As with erythromycin and other macrolides, serious allergic reactions, including angioedema and anaphylaxis (rarely fatal), drug reaction with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms (DRESS) and severe dermatologic reactions such as acute generalised exanthematous pustulosis (AGEP), Stevens-Johnson-syndrome and toxic epidermal necrolysis (TEN) have been reported. Some of these reactions with azithromycin have resulted in recurrent symptoms and required a longer period of observation and treatment.

Renal impairment

No dose adjustment is necessary in patients with mild to moderate renal impairment (GFR 10-80 ml/min). Caution is advised in patients with severe renal impairment (GFR<10 ml/min) because in these patients a 33% increase in systemic exposure of azithromycin was observed (see section 5.2).

Hepatic impairment

Since liver is the principal route of elimination for azithromycin, the use of azithromycin should be undertaken with caution in patients with significant hepatic disease. Cases of fulminant hepatitis

potentially leading to life-threatening liver failure have been reported with azithromycin (see section 4.8). Some patients may have had pre-existing hepatic disease or may have been taking other hepatotoxic medicinal products.

In case of signs and symptoms of liver dysfunction, such as rapid developing asthenia associated with jaundice, dark urine, bleeding tendency or hepatic encephalopathy, liver function tests/investigations should be performed immediately. Azithromycin administration should be stopped if liver dysfunction has emerged.

Ergot alkaloids and azithromycin

In patients receiving ergot derivatives, ergotism has been precipitated by coadministration of some macrolide antibiotics. There are no data concerning the possibility of an interaction between ergot and azithromycin. However, because of the theoretical possibility of ergotism, azithromycin and ergot derivatives should not be coadministered (see section 4.5).

QT prolongation

Prolonged cardiac repolarisation and QT interval, imparting a risk of developing cardiac arrhythmia and torsades de pointes, have been seen in treatment with other macrolides, including azithromycin (see section 4.8).

Therefore, as the following situations may lead to an increased risk for ventricular arrhythmias (including torsades de pointes) which can lead to cardiac arrest, azithromycin should be used with caution in patients with ongoing proarrhythmic conditions (especially women and elderly patients) such as patients:

- With congenital or documented QT prolongation
- Currently receiving treatment with other active substances known to prolong QT interval such as antiarrhythmics of class IA (quinidine and procainamide) and class III (dofetilide, amiodarone and sotalol), cisapride and terfenadine; antipsychotic drugs such as pimozide; antidepressants such as citalopram; and fluoroquinolones such as moxifloxacin and levofloxacin
- With electrolyte disturbance, particularly in cases of hypokalaemia and hypomagnesaemia
- With clinically relevant bradycardia, cardiac arrhythmia or severe cardiac insufficiency

The following should be considered before prescribing azithromycin:

Azithromycin film-coated tablets are not suitable for treatment of severe infections where a high concentration of the antibiotic in the blood is rapidly needed.

In areas with a high incidence of erythromycin A resistance, it is especially important to take into consideration the evolution of the pattern of susceptibility to azithromycin and other antibiotics.

Pneumonia

As for other macrolides, high resistance rates of *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (>30%) have been reported for azithromycin in some European countries (see section 5.1). This should be taken into account when treating infections caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae*.

Soft tissue infections

The main causative agent of soft tissue infections, *Staphylococcus aureus*, is frequently resistant to azithromycin. Therefore, susceptibility testing is considered a precondition for treatment of soft tissue infections with azithromycin.

Pharyngitis/tonsillitis

Azithromycin is not the substance of first choice for the treatment of pharyngitis and tonsillitis caused by *Streptococcus pyogenes*. For this and for the prophylaxis of acute rheumatic fever penicillin is the treatment of first choice.

Sinusitis

Often, azithromycin is not the substance of first choice for the treatment of sinusitis.

Acute otitis media

Often, azithromycin is not the substance of first choice for the treatment of acute otitis media.

Infected burn wounds

Azithromycin is not indicated for the treatment of infected burn wounds.

Sexually transmitted disease

In case of sexually transmitted diseases a concomitant infection by *T. pallidum* should be excluded.

Superinfections

Attention should be paid to possible symptoms of superinfections caused by non-sensitive causal agents such as fungi. A superinfection may require an interruption of the azithromycin treatment and initiation of adequate measures.

Neurological or psychiatric diseases

Azithromycin should be administered with caution to patients suffering from neurological or psychiatric diseases.

Myasthenia gravis

Exacerbations of the symptoms of myasthenia gravis and new onset of myasthenia syndrome have been reported in patients receiving azithromycin (see section 4.8).

Clostridium difficile-associated diarrhoea

Clostridium difficile-associated diarrhoea (CDAD) has been reported with the use of nearly all antibacterial agents, including azithromycin, and may range in severity from mild diarrhoea to fatal colitis. Treatment with antibacterial agents alters the normal flora of the colon leading to overgrowth of *C. difficile*.

C. difficile produces toxins A and B which contribute to the development of CDAD. Hypertoxin-producing strains of *C. difficile* cause increased morbidity and mortality, as these infections can be refractory to antimicrobial therapy and may require colectomy. CDAD must be considered in all patients who present with diarrhoea following antibiotic use. A careful medical history is necessary since CDAD has been reported to occur over two months after the administration of antibacterial agents. Should pseudomembranous colitis be induced by azithromycin, then anti-peristaltics should be contraindicated.

Long-term use

There is no experience regarding the safety and efficacy of long-term use of azithromycin for the mentioned indications. In case of rapid recurrent infections, treatment with another antibiotic should be considered.

Mycobacterium Avium Complex (MAC) infection in children

The safety and efficacy of azithromycin for the prevention or treatment of *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infection in children have not been established.

Excipient: Sodium

This medicine contains less than 1 mmol sodium (23 mg) per film-coated tablet, that is to say essentially 'sodium-free'.

4.5 Interaction with other medicinal products and other forms of interaction

Antacids

In a pharmacokinetic study investigating the effects of simultaneous administration of antacid with azithromycin, no effect on overall bioavailability was seen although peak serum concentrations were reduced by approximately 25%. In patients receiving both azithromycin and antacids, the drugs should not be taken simultaneously. Azithromycin should be taken at least 1 hour before or 2 hours after the antacid.

Coadministration of azithromycin prolonged-release granules for oral suspension with a single 20 ml dose of co-magaldrox (aluminium hydroxide and magnesium hydroxide) did not affect the rate and extent of azithromycin absorption.

Cetirizine

In healthy volunteers, coadministration of a 5-day regimen of azithromycin with cetirizine 20 mg at steady-state resulted in no pharmacokinetic interaction and no significant changes in the QT interval.

Digoxin and colchicine (P-gp substrates)

Concomitant administration of macrolide antibiotics, including azithromycin, with P-glycoprotein substrates such as digoxin and colchicine, has been reported to result in increased serum levels of the P-glycoprotein substrate. Therefore, if azithromycin and P-gp substrates such as digoxin are administered concomitantly, the possibility of elevated serum concentrations of the substrate should be considered.

Zidovudine

Single 1000 mg dose and multiple 1200 mg or 600 mg doses of azithromycin had little effect on the plasma pharmacokinetics or urinary excretion of zidovudine or its glucuronide metabolite. However, the administration of azithromycin increased the concentrations of phosphorylated zidovudine, the clinically active metabolite, in peripheral blood mononuclear cells. The clinical significance of this finding is unclear, but it may be of benefit to patients.

Didanosine (Dideoxyinosine)

Coadministration of 1200 mg/day azithromycin with 400 mg/day didanosine in 6 HIV-positive subjects did not appear to affect the steady-state pharmacokinetics of didanosine as compared with placebo.

Cytochrome P450

Azithromycin does not interact significantly with the hepatic cytochrome P450 system. It is not believed to undergo the pharmacokinetic drug interactions as seen with erythromycin and other macrolides. Hepatic cytochrome P450 induction or inactivation via cytochrome-metabolite complex does not occur with azithromycin.

Ergot

Due to the theoretical possibility of ergotism, the concurrent use of azithromycin with ergot derivatives is not recommended (see section 4.4).

Pharmacokinetic studies have been conducted between azithromycin and the following drugs known to undergo significant cytochrome P450-mediated metabolism.

Atorvastatin

Coadministration of atorvastatin (10 mg daily) and azithromycin (500 mg daily) did not alter the plasma concentration of atorvastatin (based on an HMG-CoA reductase inhibition assay). However, post-marketing cases of rhabdomyolysis in patients receiving azithromycin with statins have been reported.

Carbamazepine

In a pharmacokinetic interaction study in healthy volunteers, no significant effect was observed on the plasma levels of carbamazepine or its active metabolite in patients receiving concomitant azithromycin.

Cimetidine

In a pharmacokinetic study investigating the effects of a single dose of cimetidine, given 2 hours before azithromycin, on the pharmacokinetics of azithromycin, no alteration of azithromycin pharmacokinetics was seen.

Coumarin-type Oral Anticoagulants

In a pharmacokinetic interaction study, azithromycin did not alter the anticoagulant effect of a single 15 mg dose of warfarin administered to healthy volunteers. There have been reports received in the post-marketing period of potentiated anticoagulation subsequent to coadministration of azithromycin and coumarin-type oral anticoagulants. Although a causal relationship has not been established, consideration should be given to the frequency of prothrombin time monitoring when azithromycin is used in patients receiving coumarin-type oral anticoagulants.

Ciclosporin

In a pharmacokinetic study with healthy volunteers that were administered a 500 mg/day oral dose of azithromycin for 3 days and were then administered a single 10 mg/kg oral dose of ciclosporin, the resulting ciclosporin C_{max} and AUC_{0-5} were found to be significantly elevated. Consequently, caution should be exercised before considering concurrent administration of these drugs. If combination treatment is necessary, the ciclosporin levels should be carefully monitored and the dosage adjusted accordingly.

Efavirenz

Coadministration of a 600 mg single dose of azithromycin and 400 mg efavirenz daily for 7 days did not result in any clinically significant pharmacokinetic interactions.

Fluconazole

Coadministration of a single dose of 1,200 mg azithromycin did not alter the pharmacokinetics of a single dose of 800 mg fluconazole. Total exposure and half-life of azithromycin were unchanged by the coadministration of fluconazole, however, a clinically insignificant decrease in C_{max} (18%) of azithromycin was observed.

Indinavir

Coadministration of a single dose of 1,200 mg azithromycin had no statistically significant effect on the pharmacokinetics of indinavir administered as 800 mg three times daily for 5 days.

Methylprednisolone

In a pharmacokinetic interaction study in healthy volunteers, azithromycin had no significant effect on the pharmacokinetics of methylprednisolone.

Midazolam

In healthy volunteers, coadministration of azithromycin 500 mg/day for 3 days did not cause clinically significant changes in the pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics of a single 15 mg dose of midazolam.

Nelfinavir

Coadministration of azithromycin (1,200 mg) and nelfinavir at steady-state (750 mg three times daily) resulted in increased azithromycin concentrations. No clinically significant adverse effects were observed and no dose adjustment is required.

Rifabutin

Coadministration of azithromycin and rifabutin did not affect the serum concentrations of either drug.

Neutropenia was observed in subjects receiving concomitant treatment of azithromycin and rifabutin. Although neutropenia has been associated with the use of rifabutin, a causal relationship to combination with azithromycin has not been established (see section 4.8).

Sildenafil

In normal healthy male volunteers, there was no evidence of an effect of azithromycin (500 mg daily for three days) on the AUC and C_{max} of sildenafil or its major circulating metabolite.

Terfenadine

Pharmacokinetic studies have reported no evidence of an interaction between azithromycin and terfenadine.

There have been rare cases reported where the possibility of such an interaction could not be entirely excluded; however there was no specific evidence that such an interaction had occurred.

Azithromycin should be administered with caution in combination with terfenadine.

Theophylline

There is no evidence of a clinically significant pharmacokinetic interaction when azithromycin and theophylline are coadministered to healthy volunteers.

Triazolam

In 14 healthy volunteers, coadministration of azithromycin 500 mg on day 1 and 250 mg on day 2 with 0.125 mg triazolam on day 2 had no significant effect on any of the pharmacokinetic variables for triazolam compared to triazolam and placebo.

Trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole

Coadministration of trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole DS (160 mg/800 mg) for 7 days with azithromycin 1,200 mg on day 7 had no significant effect on peak concentrations, total exposure or urinary excretion of either trimethoprim or sulfamethoxazole. Azithromycin serum concentrations were similar to those seen in other studies.

Cisapride

Cisapride is metabolized in the liver by the enzyme CYP3A4. Because macrolides inhibit this enzyme, concomitant administration of cisapride may cause the increase of QT interval prolongation, ventricular arrhythmias and torsades de pointes.

Astemizole, alfentanil

No data are available on interactions with astemizole and alfentanil. Caution should be exercised with concomitant use of these drugs and azithromycin in view of the described potentiation of its effect during concomitant use of the macrolide antibiotic erythromycin.

Substances that prolong the QT interval

Azithromycin should not be used concurrently with other active substances that prolong the QT interval (see section 4.4).

4.6 Fertility, pregnancy and lactation

Pregnancy

There are no adequate data from the use of azithromycin in pregnant women. In reproduction toxicity studies in animals azithromycin was shown to pass the placenta, but no teratogenic effects were observed (see section 5.3). The safety of azithromycin has not been confirmed with regard to the use of the active substance during pregnancy. Therefore azithromycin should only be used during pregnancy if the benefit outweighs the risk.

Breastfeeding

Azithromycin has been reported to be secreted into human breast milk, but there are no adequate and well-controlled clinical studies in nursing women that have characterized the pharmacokinetics of azithromycin excretion into human breast milk. As many agents are excreted in breast milk, azithromycin should not be used in the treatment of a lactating woman unless the physician feels that the potential benefits justify the potential risks to the infant.

Fertility

In fertility studies conducted in rat, reduced pregnancy rates were noted following administration of azithromycin. The relevance of this finding to humans is unknown.

4.7 Effects on ability to drive and use machines

Azithromycin Film-Coated Tablets have no or negligible influence on the ability to drive and use machines. However, the possibility of undesirable effects like dizziness and convulsions should be taken into account when performing these activities.

4.8 Undesirable effects

About 13% of patients included in clinical trials reported adverse events, most commonly gastrointestinal disorders.

The table below lists the adverse reactions identified through clinical trial experience and postmarketing surveillance by system organ class and frequency. Within each frequency grouping, undesirable effects are presented in order of decreasing seriousness.

<i>System organ class</i>	<i>Very common (≥1/10)</i>	<i>Common (≥1/100 to <1/10)</i>	<i>Uncommon (≥1/1000 to <1/100)</i>	<i>Rare (≥1/10000 to <1/1000)</i>	<i>Very rare (<1/10,000)</i>	<i>Not known (cannot be estimated from the available data)</i>
<i>Infections and infestations</i>			Candidiasis, Vaginal infection, Pneumonia Fungal infection Bacterial infection Pharyngitis Gastroenteritis Respiratory disorder Rhinitis Oral candidiasis			Pseudomembranous colitis (see section 4.4)
<i>Blood and lymphatic system disorders</i>			Leucopenia Neutropenia Eosinophilia			Thrombocytopenia Haemolytic anaemia
<i>Immune system disorders</i>			Angioedema Hypersensitivity			Anaphylactic reaction (see section 4.4)

<i>System organ class</i>	<i>Very common (≥1/10)</i>	<i>Common (≥1/100 to <1/10)</i>	<i>Uncommon (≥1/1000 to <1/100)</i>	<i>Rare (≥1/10000 to <1/1000)</i>	<i>Very rare (<1/10,000)</i>	<i>Not known (cannot be estimated from the available data)</i>
<i>Metabolism and nutrition disorders</i>			Anorexia			
<i>Psychiatric disorders</i>			Nervousness Insomnia	Agitation Depersonalisation		Aggression Anxiety Delirium Hallucination
<i>Nervous system disorders</i>		Headache	Dizziness Somnolence Dysgeusia Paraesthesia			Syncope Convulsion Hypoaesthesia Psychomotor hyperactivity Anosmia Ageusia Parosmia Myasthenia gravis (see section 4.4)
<i>Eye disorders</i>			Visual impairment			
<i>Ear and labyrinth disorders</i>			Ear disorder Vertigo			Hearing impairment including deafness and/or tinnitus
<i>Cardiac disorders</i>			Palpitations			Torsades de pointes (see section 4.4) Arrhythmia (see section 4.4) including ventricular tachycardia Electrocardiogram QT prolonged (see section 4.4)
<i>Vascular disorders</i>			Hot flush			Hypotension
<i>Respiratory, thoracic and mediastinal</i>			Dyspnoea Epistaxis			

<i>System organ class</i>	<i>Very common (≥1/10)</i>	<i>Common (≥1/100 to <1/10)</i>	<i>Uncommon (≥1/1000 to <1/100)</i>	<i>Rare (≥1/10000 to <1/1000)</i>	<i>Very rare (<1/10,000)</i>	<i>Not known (cannot be estimated from the available data)</i>
<i>disorders</i>						
<i>Gastrointestinal disorders</i>	Diarrhoea	Vomiting Abdominal pain, Nausea	Constipation Flatulence Dyspepsia Gastritis Dysphagia Abdominal distension Dry mouth Eructation Mouth ulceration Salivary hypersecretion Loose stools	Discolouration of the teeth		Pancreatitis Tongue discolouration
<i>Hepatobiliary disorders</i>			Hepatitis	Hepatic function abnormal Jaundice cholestatic		Hepatic failure which has rarely resulted in death (see section 4.4) Hepatitis fulminant Hepatic necrosis
<i>Skin and subcutaneous tissue disorders</i>			Rash Pruritus Urticaria Dermatitis Dry skin Hyperhidrosiss	Photosensitivity reaction, acute generalised exanthematous pustulosis (AGEP)	Drug reaction with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms (DRESS)	Stevens-Johnson syndrome Toxic epidermal necrolysis Erythema multiforme Maculopapular rash
<i>Musculoskeletal and connective tissue disorders</i>			Osteoarthritis Myalgia Back pain Neck pain			Arthralgia
<i>Renal and urinary disorders</i>			Dysuria Renal pain			Acute renal failure Interstitial nephritis
<i>Reproductive system and breast</i>			Vaginitis Metrorrhagia Testicular			

<i>System organ class</i>	<i>Very common (≥1/10)</i>	<i>Common (≥1/100 to <1/10)</i>	<i>Uncommon (≥1/1000 to <1/100)</i>	<i>Rare (≥1/10000 to <1/1000)</i>	<i>Very rare (<1/10,000)</i>	<i>Not known (cannot be estimated from the available data)</i>
<i>disorders</i>			disorder			
<i>General disorders and administration site conditions</i>			Oedema Asthenia Malaise Fatigue Face oedema Chest pain Pyrexia Pain Peripheral oedema			
<i>Investigations</i>		Lymphocyte count decreased Eosinophil count increased Blood bicarbonate decreased Basophils increased Monocytes increased Neutrophils increased	Aspartate aminotransferase increased Alanine aminotransferase increased Blood bilirubin increased Blood urea increased Blood creatinine increased Blood potassium abnormal Blood alkaline phosphatase increased Chloride increased Glucose increased Platelets increased Hematocrit decreased Bicarbonate increased Abnormal sodium			
<i>Injury, poisoning and procedural complication</i>			Post procedural complication			

<i>System organ class</i>	<i>Very common (≥1/10)</i>	<i>Common (≥1/100 to <1/10)</i>	<i>Uncommon (≥1/1000 to <1/100)</i>	<i>Rare (≥1/10000 to <1/1000)</i>	<i>Very rare (<1/10,000)</i>	<i>Not known (cannot be estimated from the available data)</i>
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Adverse reactions possibly or probably related to Mycobacterium Avium Complex prophylaxis and treatment based on clinical trial experience and post-marketing surveillance. These adverse reactions differ from those reported with immediate release or the prolonged release formulations, either in kind or in frequency

	<i>Very Common (≥1/10)</i>	<i>Common (≥1/100 to <1/10)</i>	<i>Uncommon (≥1/1000 to <1/100)</i>
Metabolism and nutrition disorders		Anorexia	
Nervous system disorders		Dizziness Headache Paraesthesia Dysgeusia	Hypoaesthesia
Eye disorders		Visual impairment	
Ear and labyrinth disorders		Deafness	Hearing impaired Tinnitus
Cardiac disorders			Palpitations
Gastrointestinal disorders	Diarrhoea Abdominal pain Nausea Flatulence Abdominal discomfort		
Hepatobiliary disorders			Hepatitis
Skin and subcutaneous tissue disorders		Rash Pruritus	Stevens-Johnson syndrome Photosensitivity reaction
Musculoskeletal and connective tissue disorders		Arthralgia	

General disorders and administration site conditions		Fatigue	Asthenia Malaise
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Reporting of suspected adverse reactions

Consumers are advised to report adverse events related to the use of medicines and medical product to the nearest NAFDAC office, NAFDAC PRASCOR (20543 TOLL FREE from all networks), pharmacovigilance@nafdac.gov.ng or via the eReporting platform available on the NAFDAC Website: <https://primaryreporting.whoumc.org/Reporting/Reporter?OrganizationID=NG>

4.9 Overdose

Adverse events experienced in higher than recommended doses were similar to those seen at normal doses

Symptoms

The typical symptoms of an overdose with macrolide antibiotics include reversible loss of hearing, severe nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Treatment

In cases of overdose the administration of medicinal charcoal and general symptomatic treatment and measures to support vital functions are indicated as required.

5. PHARMACOLOGICAL PROPERTIES

5.1 Pharmacodynamic properties

Pharmacotherapeutic group: Antibacterials for systemic use; macrolides
ATC code: J01FA10.

Azithromycin is a macrolide antibiotic belonging to the azalide group.

The molecule is constructed by adding a nitrogen atom to the lactone ring of erythromycin A. The chemical name of azithromycin is 9-deoxy-9a-aza-9a-methyl-9a-homo-erythromycin A. The molecular weight is 749.0.

Mechanism of action

The action mechanism of azithromycin is based upon the suppression of bacterial protein synthesis, by binding to the 50 S subunit and thus inhibiting the translocation of peptides.

(Cross)-Resistance

Generally, the resistance of different bacterial species to macrolides has been reported to occur by three mechanisms associated with target site alteration, antibiotic modification, or altered antibiotic transport (efflux). The efflux in streptococci is conferred by the *mef* genes and results in a macrolide-restricted resistance (M phenotype). Target modification is controlled by *erm* encoded methylases.

A complete cross-resistance exists among erythromycin, azithromycin, other macrolides and lincosamides for *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, beta-haemolytic streptococci of group A, *Enterococcus*

spp. and *Staphylococcus aureus*, including methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* (MRSA).

Penicillin-sensitive *S. pneumoniae* are more likely to be susceptible to azithromycin than are penicillin-resistant strains of *S. pneumoniae*. Methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* (MRSA) is less likely to be susceptible to azithromycin than methicillin-sensitive *S. aureus* (MSSA).

The induction of significant resistance in both *in vitro* and *in vivo* models is ≤ 1 dilution rise in MICs for *S. pyogenes*, *H. influenzae* and *Enterobacteriaceae* after nine sub-lethal passages of active substance and three dilution increase for *S. aureus* and development of *in vitro* resistance due to mutation is rare.

Breakpoints

Azithromycin susceptibility breakpoints for typical bacterial pathogens:

EUCAST (European Committee on Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing) Breakpoints (2017):

Pathogens	susceptible [mg/l]	resistant [mg/l]
<i>Staphylococcus</i> spp.	≤ 1	>2
Streptococcus groups A, B, C and G	≤ 0.25	>0.5
<i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i>	≤ 0.25	>0.5
<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i>	≤ 0.125	>4
<i>Moraxella catarrhalis</i>	≤ 0.25	>0.5
<i>Neisseria gonorrhoeae</i>	≤ 0.25	>0.5

Susceptibility

The prevalence of acquired resistance may vary geographically and with time for selected species and local information on resistance is desirable, particularly when treating severe infections. As necessary, expert advice should be sought when the local prevalence of resistance is such that the utility of the agent in at least some types of infections is questionable.

Species for which acquired resistance may be a problem: prevalence of resistance is equal to or greater than 10% in at least one country in the European Union.

Table 1: Antibacterial spectrum of azithromycin

Species	
Commonly susceptible species	
Aerobic Gram-positive	
<i>Corynebacterium diphtheriae</i>	
<i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i>	
Erythromycin-sensitive	
Penicillin-sensitive	
<i>Streptococcus pyogenes</i>	
Erythromycin-sensitive	
Aerobic Gram-negative	
<i>Bordetella pertussis</i>	
<i>Escherichia coli</i> -ETEC	
<i>Escherichia coli</i> -EAEC	
<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i>	
<i>Haemophilus ducreyi</i>	
<i>Legionella</i> spp.	
<i>Moraxella catarrhalis</i>	
Erythromycin-sensitive	

Species	
Erythromycin-intermediate	
<i>Pasteurella multocida</i>	
Anaerobic	
<i>Fusobacterium nucleatum</i>	
<i>Fusobacterium necrophorum</i>	
<i>Prevotella</i> spp.	
<i>Porphyromonas</i> spp.	
<i>Propionibacterium</i> spp.	
Other micro-organisms	
<i>Chlamydia pneumoniae</i>	
<i>Chlamydia trachomatis</i>	
<i>Listeria</i> spp.	
<i>Mycobacterium avium</i> Complex	
<i>Mycoplasma pneumoniae</i>	
<i>Ureaplasma urealyticum</i>	
Species for which acquired resistance may be a problem	
Aerobic Gram-positive	
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> Methicillin-susceptible	
Coagulase-neg. staphylococci Methicillin-susceptible ⁺	
<i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i> Penicillin-intermediate Penicillin-resistant Erythromycin-intermediate	
<i>Streptococcus pyogenes</i> Erythromycin-intermediate	
<i>Streptococci viridans</i> group Penicillin-intermediate	
Aerobic Gram-negative	
<i>Moraxella catarrhalis</i> Erythromycin-resistant	
Anaerobic	
<i>Peptostreptococcus</i> spp.	
Inherently resistant organisms	
Aerobic Gram positive	
<i>Corynebacterium</i> spp.	
<i>Enterococcus</i> spp.	
<i>Staphylococci</i> MRSA, MRSE	
<i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i> Erythromycin-resistant Penicillin & Erythromycin resistant	
<i>Streptococcus pyogenes</i> Erythromycin-resistant	
<i>Streptococci viridans</i> group Penicillin-resistant Erythromycin-resistant	
Aerobic Gram-negative	
<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	
Anaerobic	
<i>Bacteroides fragilis</i> group	

+ Resistance is greater than 50%.

Paediatric population

Following the assessment of studies conducted in children, the use of azithromycin is not recommended for the treatment of malaria, neither as monotherapy nor combined with chloroquine or artemisinin based drugs, as non-inferiority to anti-malarial drugs recommended in the treatment of uncomplicated malaria was not established.

5.2 Pharmacokinetic properties

Absorption

Following oral administration the bioavailability of azithromycin is approximately 37%. Peak plasma levels are reached after 2-3 hours.

Distribution

Orally administered azithromycin is widely distributed throughout the body. Pharmacokinetic studies have shown considerably higher azithromycin concentrations in the tissues (up to 50 times the maximum concentration observed in the plasma) than in the plasma. This indicates that the substance is extensively bound in the tissues (steady-state volume of distribution approximately 3 l/kg). The mean maximum concentration observed (C_{max}) after a single dose of 500 mg is approximately 0.4 µg/ml, 2-3 hours after administration. With the recommended dosage no accumulation in the serum/plasma occurs. Accumulation does occur in the tissues where the levels are much higher than in the serum/plasma. Three days after administration of 500 mg as a single dose or in divided doses concentrations of 1.3-4.8 µg/g, 0.6-2.3 µg/g, 2.0-2.8 µg/g and 0-0.3 µg/ml are found in lung, prostate, tonsil and serum respectively.

Mean peak concentrations measured in peripheral leukocytes are higher than the MIC_{90} of the most common pathogens.

In experimental *in vitro* and *in vivo* studies, azithromycin accumulates in phagocytes; release is promoted by active phagocytosis. In animal models this process appeared to contribute to the accumulation of azithromycin in the tissue.

The binding of azithromycin to plasma proteins is variable and varies from 52% at 0.005 µg/ml to 18% at 0.5 µg/ml, depending on the serum concentration.

Biotransformation and Elimination

The terminal plasma elimination half-life follows the tissue depletion half-life of 2 to 4 days. In elderly volunteers (>65 years), higher (29%) AUC values were always observed after a 5-day course than in younger volunteers (<45 years). However, these differences are not considered to be clinically relevant; no dose adjustment is therefore recommended. Approximately 12% of an intravenously administered dose is excreted in unchanged form with the urine over a period of 3 days; the major proportion in the first 24 hours. Concentrations of up to 237 µg/ml azithromycin, 2 days after a 5-day course of treatment, have been found in human bile, together with 10 metabolites (formed by N- and O-demethylation, by hydroxylation of the desosamine and aglycone rings, and by splitting of the cladinose conjugate). A comparison of HPLC and microbiological determination suggests that the metabolites do not play a role in the microbiological activity of azithromycin.

Pharmacokinetics in special populations

Renal impairment

Following a single oral dose of azithromycin 1g, mean C_{max} and AUC_{0-120} increased by 5.1% and 4.2% respectively, in subjects with mild to moderate renal impairment (glomerular filtration rate of 10-80 ml/min) compared with normal renal function (GFR > 80 ml/min). In subjects with severe renal impairment (GFR <10 ml/min), the mean C_{max} and AUC_{0-120} increased 61% and 35% respectively compared to normal.

Hepatic impairment

In patients with mild to moderate hepatic impairment, there is no evidence of a marked change in serum pharmacokinetics of azithromycin compared to normal hepatic function. In these patients, urinary recovery of azithromycin appears to increase perhaps to compensate for reduced hepatic clearance. There are no data on azithromycin use in cases of more severe hepatic impairment.

Elderly

The pharmacokinetics of azithromycin in elderly men was similar to that of young adults; however, in elderly women, although higher peak concentrations (increased by 30-50%) were observed, no significant accumulation occurred.

Paediatric population

Pharmacokinetics have been studied in children aged 4 months – 15 years taking capsules, granules or suspension. At 10 mg/kg on day 1 followed by 5 mg/kg on days 2-5, the C_{max} achieved is slightly lower than adults with 224 µg/l in children aged 0.6-5 years and after 3 days dosing and 383 µg/l in those aged 6-15 years. The $t_{1/2}$ of 36 h in the older children was within the expected range for adults.

5.3 Preclinical safety data

In animal studies using exposures 40 times those achieved at the clinical therapeutic dosages, azithromycin was found to have caused reversible phospholipidosis, but as a rule there were no associated toxicological consequences. The relevance of this finding to humans receiving azithromycin in accordance with the recommendations is unknown.

Electrophysiological investigations have shown that azithromycin prolongs the QT interval.

Carcinogenic potential

Long-term studies in animals have not been performed to evaluate carcinogenic potential.

Mutagenic potential

There was no evidence of a potential for genetic and chromosome mutations in *in vivo* and *in vitro* test models.

Reproductive toxicity

No teratogenic effects were observed in embryotoxicity studies in rats after oral administration of azithromycin. In rats, azithromycin dosages of 100 and 200 mg/kg body weight/day led to mild retardations in foetal ossification and in maternal weight gain. In peri- and postnatal studies in rats, mild retardations following treatment with 50 mg/kg/day azithromycin and above were observed.

6. PHARMACEUTICAL PARTICULARS

6.1 List of excipients

Core:

Calcium hydrogen phosphate
Hypromellose
Maize starch
Starch, pregelatinised
Cellulose, microcrystalline
Magnesium stearate
Sodium lauryl sulfate.

Coating:

Hypromellose
Colour indigotin lake (E132)
Titanium dioxide (E171)
Polysorbate 80
Talc.

6.2 Incompatibilities

Not applicable.

6.3 Shelf life

3 years.

6.4 Special precautions for storage

This medicinal product does not require any special storage conditions.

6.5 Nature and contents of container

Azithromycin 500 mg tablets are packed in PVC/Aluminium blisters.

Pack sizes: 1, 2, 3, 6, 30 tablets.

Not all pack sizes may be marketed.

6.6 Special precautions for disposal

No special requirements.