Azathioprine
(Imuran)

Common Drug Name
Azathioprine

Common Brand Names
Imuran

A generic product is available.

Storage
Store at room temperature in a tightly closed container, protected from light.

Once the injectable is reconstituted (the powder is mixed with water), use within 24 hours if no preservative is present.

Uses
Azathioprine is an immunosuppressive medication, which is often used in combination with other drugs to suppress the immune system. It may take up to 6 weeks to see an effect.

Dogs: Azathioprine is approved to use as an immunosuppressive to treat immune mediated diseases, such as immune mediated hemolytic anemia, certain types of kidney disease, autoimmune skin diseases, lupus, and rheumatoid arthritis.

Cats: Azathioprine may be used to treat autoimmune skin diseases.

Dose and Administration
Always follow the dosage instructions provided by your veterinarian. If you have difficulty giving the medication, contact your veterinarian.

This medication may be taken with food, if necessary, to avoid side effects.

If you miss a dose, give it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the one you missed and go back to the regular schedule. Do not give 2 doses at once.

This medication should only be given to the pet for whom it was prescribed.

Possible Side Effects
The most common side effect is suppression of the bone marrow. This may lead to anemia, with pale gums, weakness, and lethargy; bruising or bleeding tendencies; and decreased white blood cell counts, which may cause the animal to be more at risk of infections.

Monitor for signs of infection, such as abnormal breathing, fever, depression, lameness, change in urination or urine color, or diarrhea.

Other side effects include vomiting, diarrhea, poor hair growth, skin rashes, pancreatitis, and liver injury, perhaps with jaundice (yellowing of the gums, skin, or eyes).

Contact your veterinarian immediately if you see any of the above signs in your pet.

If your pet experiences an allergic reaction to the medication, signs may include facial swelling, hives, scratching, sudden onset of diarrhea, vomiting, shock, seizures, pale gums, cold limbs, or coma. If you observe any of these signs, contact your veterinarian immediately.

Precautions
Azathioprine can be absorbed through the skin, so wear gloves when giving it, and wash your hands afterwards. Pregnant owners should not handle this medication.

Because your pet’s immune system will be suppressed, your pet will be more susceptible to infections. Avoid situations in which your pet may be exposed to other animals (going outside unsupervised, breed shows, training classes, etc.). Antibiotics may be given during treatment with azathioprine to help prevent infection.

Do not use in breeding or pregnant animals.

Use with caution in animals with liver or pancreatic disease.

Use with extreme caution in cats, who are more susceptible to toxic effects, especially bone marrow suppression and bleeding.

Azathioprine may increase the risk of cancer in later life.

If on long-term therapy, do not discontinue the drug abruptly, since it may cause the disease to start again. The dose needs to be tapered off over several months as directed by your veterinarian.

Consult with your veterinarian regarding the physical examinations and laboratory testing necessary prior to, and during, treatment with azathioprine.

Drug, Food, and Test Interactions
Consult your veterinarian before using azathioprine with vitamins, supplements, modified live vaccines, and allopurinol, since interactions may occur.

Signs of Toxicity/Overdose
Bleeding, bruising, loss of appetite, and vomiting may be the most common signs of an overdose or toxicity. If you know or suspect your pet has had an overdose, or if you observe any of these signs in your pet, contact your veterinarian immediately.

Keep this and all other medications out of the reach of children and pets.