

# CLARITHROMYCIN

**Other names: Biaxin®, Biaxin BID®, Biaxin XL®**

## WHY is this drug prescribed?

Clarithromycin is an anti-infective drug (antibiotic) that is used to prevent or treat *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infection. Clarithromycin may also be used to treat other types of infections such as bacterial pneumonia, toxoplasmosis, and stomach/intestinal ulcers due to an organism called *H.pylori*.

## HOW should this drug be taken?

Depending on the type of infection you have, the dose of clarithromycin will vary. For example, when used to **prevent or treat MAC infection**, the usual dose of clarithromycin is 500 mg twice daily.

For bacterial pneumonias, clarithromycin is given at a dose of 250 to 500 mg twice daily for 7 to 14 days (Biaxin® or Biaxin BID®), or 1000 mg once a day for 5, 7 or 14 days (Biaxin XL®).

For the treatment of *H.pylori* stomach and intestinal ulcers, the usual dose is 500 mg twice daily, in conjunction with two other drugs.

Clarithromycin is available as a 250 mg or 500 mg regular tablets or a 500 mg extended release tablet. It is also available as an oral suspension.

Your dosage is:

250 mg tablet

500 mg tablet

500 mg extended release tablet

\_\_\_\_ tablet(s) (\_\_\_\_ mg) \_\_\_\_ times a day

or

25 mg / mL oral suspension

50 mg / mL oral suspension

\_\_\_\_ mL (\_\_\_\_ mg) \_\_\_\_ times a day

Clarithromycin regular tablets and oral suspension may be taken with or without food. The clarithromycin oral suspension bottle should be well shaken before each dose. The extended release tablets (Biaxin XL®) should be taken with food and swallowed whole.

Take clarithromycin for the duration of time it is prescribed. If you stop it earlier, your infection may come back. If the infection worsens or persists, consult your doctor.

## What should you do if you FORGET a dose?

If you miss a dose of clarithromycin, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is time for your next dose, do not double the dose, just carry on with your regular schedule.

## What ADVERSE EFFECTS can this drug cause? What should you do about them?

Clarithromycin is usually well tolerated. At the higher doses, it may cause **diarrhea, nausea**

and **vomiting**. If you experience any of these adverse effects and they are bothersome, please talk to your doctor or pharmacist. They can suggest ways of managing these adverse effects.

Rarely, **temporary hearing disruptions** (fullness of the ears, decreased hearing, ringing of the ears), **rash** and other allergic reactions have been reported. If these symptoms occur, please contact your doctor or pharmacist.

Rarely, **increases in your liver enzymes**, a sign that indicates liver damage, can present itself. If you have to take clarithromycin for a long period of time, your doctor will check your blood for changes in your liver enzymes.

**It is important that you keep your doctor appointments and come for your laboratory tests so that your progress can be followed.**

## What other PRECAUTIONS should you follow while using this drug?

Certain drugs can increase or decrease the effect of clarithromycin. Also, clarithromycin might influence the effect of other drugs. Inform your doctor and pharmacist of all prescribed and non-prescribed drugs you are taking. As well, you should inform them of natural products you are taking. If you wish to start a new drug or natural product, please consult with your pharmacist before doing so.

## You should NOT take the following drugs:

- Astemizole (Hismanal®),  
Cisapride (Prepulsid®), Pimozide (Orap®), Terfenadine (Seldane®)

**Drugs that should be used with caution or that may require a change in dosage include:**

Carbamazepine (Tegretol®)  
Cyclosporine (Neoral®, Sandimmune®)  
Dihydroergotamine (Migranal®)  
Digoxin (Lanoxin®)  
Disopyramide (Rythmodan®)  
Ergotamine (Cafergot®)  
Lopinavir / ritonavir (Kaletra™)  
Midazolam (Versed®)  
Ritonavir (Norvir®)  
Tacrolimus (Prograf®)  
Theophylline (Theodur®, Quibron®, Uniphyll®)  
Triazolam (Halcion®)  
Warfarin (Coumadin®)

If you have a history of liver disease (cirrhosis, hepatitis), please notify your doctor prior to taking this drug.

Clarithromycin should NOT be taken if you are pregnant, unless your doctor believes the benefits outweigh the risks. The safety of clarithromycin has not been established during breastfeeding. Please discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist if this is a concern.

**If you have a history of allergies to either erythromycin or azithromycin, please notify your doctor prior to taking clarithromycin.**

**How should this drug be STORED?**

Clarithromycin tablets and oral suspension should be stored in a cool (15-30°C) dry place, protected from light and well out of the reach of children. The clarithromycin oral

suspension should NOT be kept in the refrigerator. The suspension is good for 14 days after it is prepared. Ensure that the drug has not expired by checking the expiry date ("EXP") shown on the outside of the package.

Do not store in your bathroom or kitchen. Heat and moisture may cause the drug to be less active.

**If you have any questions or concerns about this drug or if you are experiencing adverse effects, please discuss them with your pharmacist, doctor or nurse.**

**Write questions or concerns down to ensure they are addressed.**

The following pharmacist is available to answer questions:

**Pharmacist:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

Reference: Product Monograph. Biaxin® (clarithromycin). St-Laurent, Qc, Canada: Abbott Laboratories Limited, 2009. Prepared by the Ontario HIV Pharmacy Professional Specialty Group, 2003. Updated 2009.

Additional medication fact sheets and updates may be found at: [www.hivclinic.ca](http://www.hivclinic.ca)

***CLARITHROMYCIN***

***MEDICATION***

***FACT SHEET***