



AIFA: no effective antibiotics against COVID-19

With regard to recent press reports informing about the shortage of azithromycin also due to its excessive and improper use against COVID-19, AIFA points out that neither azithromycin nor any other antibiotics in general are approved or recommended for treating COVID-19.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, AIFA has strongly discouraged the use of azithromycin against COVID-19. As extensively demonstrated by a number of well-conducted clinical studies published in the best international journals, there is no evidence that the use of azithromycin has a protective effect against the progression of the disease, in terms of either reducing transmission, healing times, or mortality. There is clear and unequivocal evidence that azithromycin or any other antibiotic should no longer be used against COVID-19, as clearly indicated by all international guidelines for the treatment of the SARS-CoV-2 infection.

It should be borne in mind that antibiotics are not effective for treating viral infections, including seasonal influenza.

In addition to having no scientific basis, the indiscriminate use of azithromycin or any other antibiotic exposes to the double risk of producing shortages of antibiotics for those people who actually need them for treating bacterial infections, as well as of increasing the risk of developing and spreading antibiotic-resistant bacteria. In this regard, AIFA clarifies that, following the checks carried out, the current shortage does not result from exports or other distribution anomalies, but from the prescription of the medicinal product outside the authorised indications.

Given that AIFA has already put in place, as always in these cases, all measures to counter such shortage to ensure that the medicinal product is available for the authorised uses, the Agency recalls all prescribers and citizens to responsibly use antibiotics only when indicated. Using antibiotics with care and caution must be a commitment and a duty for all, from healthcare professionals to the general population, as this is the main instrument for addressing the problem of antibiotic resistance which, in addition to COVID-19, is one of the main global challenges both for health and the ecosystem in general.