

Prazosin

Minipress

A blood-pressure medicine also used for PTSD-related nightmares. The goal is better sleep without dizziness or falls.

From Jeffrey Panko, PMHNP-BC's education collection ·

Draft for review · Clinical content has not been revalidated for this website.

FIRST DOSE AT BEDTIME

STAND UP SLOWLY

Follow your own schedule. Nightmare dosing and blood-pressure dosing are not the same.

What it is used for

Prazosin is approved for high blood pressure. It is also prescribed off-label to reduce trauma-related nightmares; some people benefit and others do not.

It does not treat every PTSD symptom. Therapy and the rest of your treatment plan still matter, even when nights improve.

How it works

It blocks some adrenaline-like signals. This relaxes blood vessels and may reduce the nighttime alarm response linked with nightmares.

It is not a benzodiazepine or a standard sleeping pill. Even so, it can make you drowsy, dizzy or less steady.

What to expect over time

FIRST DOSE / INCREASES

Dizziness or fainting can happen early. Take the first dose at bedtime.

DAYS TO WEEKS

Nightmares may improve as your clinician adjusts the dose.

AT EACH REVIEW

Compare sleep benefit with dizziness and daytime function. More is not always better.

Taking your medication

For nightmares, clinicians usually start with 1 mg at bedtime and increase slowly. Follow your prescription; do not raise the dose yourself or use someone else's schedule.

Do not drive or do hazardous work for 24 hours after your first dose or any increase, and longer if dizzy or sleepy. Sit up first, then stand slowly with support.

Heat, dehydration and alcohol can worsen dizziness. Ask what fluid intake is right for you. If you feel faint, sit or lie down safely and contact your team.

When to get help

Call 911: collapse, serious injury, severe breathing trouble, face/throat swelling, a seizure or inability to wake. Persistent severe faintness needs urgent assessment.

Go to the emergency department: an erection lasting more than 4 hours, even without pain. Seek help sooner for a painful, persistent erection.

Possible overdose? Call Poison Control now, 1-800-222-1222, even without symptoms. Do not make yourself vomit; call 911 for severe symptoms.

Early side effects

Dizziness when standing, headache, drowsiness, weakness, nausea or a pounding heartbeat may occur. Tell your clinician if these persist or interfere with daily activities.

Other effects to discuss

Stuffy nose, ankle swelling, dry mouth, blurred vision or stomach/bowel changes can occur. Report falls, near-fainting or ongoing fatigue; do not just keep increasing the dose.

What to keep track of

Track sleep, doses, dizziness and blood pressure. Report missed doses, illness or new drugs before an increase.

Before you start

Tell your team about low blood pressure, fainting, falls, heart problems, kidney/liver disease, narcolepsy, pregnancy or nursing. Tell your cataract surgeon if you take prazosin now or have ever taken it. Do not stop it for surgery on your own. Report loud snoring, breathing pauses or persistent daytime sleepiness too.

Medicines & interactions

Blood-pressure and prostate medicines

Other blood-pressure drugs, water pills and alpha blockers can add to the drop in blood pressure. Have your pharmacist check the whole list.

Erectile-dysfunction medicines

Sildenafil, tadalafil and related medicines can cause more dizziness or fainting with prazosin. Ask before combining; spacing doses apart does not guarantee safety.

Alcohol and sedating medicines

Avoid alcohol while learning your response. Sleep medicines, opioids, benzodiazepines and cannabis can add impairment and falls.

Changes to any medicine

Tell your team when a drug is started, stopped or increased. This includes propranolol and other beta blockers; your prazosin plan may need review.

Everyday tips

Keep a brief sleep and nightmare record.

Use a night-light and clear the path to the bathroom.

Continue trauma-focused therapy and your agreed PTSD care.

Ask about other sleep disorders if sleep stays poor.

Your questions, answered

What if I miss a dose?

Take it when remembered unless the next dose is near; then skip it. Never double up. If you miss two or more doses, contact your prescriber before restarting: you may need a lower dose again.

What if it does not help?

Tell your clinician how often nightmares occur and what side effects you have. A careful dose adjustment may help, but not everyone responds. Do not keep raising the dose yourself.

Is it addictive?

Prazosin is not a controlled drug and does not have the established dependence pattern of benzodiazepines. That does not make it risk-free or safe to take extra.

Can I stop when nightmares improve?

Discuss a stopping plan first. Nightmares or high blood pressure may return. Your clinician may reduce it gradually, especially after regular or higher-dose use.

Storage & safety

Keep tightly closed at room temperature, away from heat, moisture and light, and locked away from children and pets. Do not share. Ask your pharmacist about take-back disposal.

A final reminder

Follow your own prescribed plan.

About this information

For general information only; not a substitute for individualized medical advice. This sheet does not cover every risk or interaction. Ask your prescriber or pharmacist before changing how you take this medication.

Sources

1. <https://labeling.pfizer.com/ShowLabeling.aspx?id=637>
 2. <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a682245.html>
 3. https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/txessentials/clinician_guide_meds.asp
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Educational inclusion does not mean this medication or its indications are treated at this practice. Review the guide for your exact product with your prescriber or pharmacist.

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