

Prazosin

Minipress, a blood pressure medicine used at night for nightmares

Prazosin is used at bedtime to quiet the nightmares and broken sleep that often come with PTSD.

WHAT IT TREATS

PTSD nightmares, blood pressure

HOW YOU TAKE IT

At bedtime, food not needed

WHEN IT WORKS

Nights ease in 1-2 weeks

HABIT FORMING

No

✓ This medicine carries **no special FDA safety warning** of that kind.

① WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Prazosin** is a blood pressure medicine that also calms the adrenaline surges your brain makes at night, which is what feeds trauma nightmares.
- It is not a sleeping pill and it is not a tranquilizer. It does not knock you out. It makes the night quieter so sleep can hold together.
- It is not habit forming. Your body will not come to need more and more of it to get the same effect.
- People who respond describe fewer nightmares, less thrashing and sweating, and mornings that feel less wrung out.

③ HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take it at bedtime. Your prescriber will start low and raise it slowly over a few weeks to find the amount that works for you.
- Take the very first dose already in bed. It can lower your blood pressure and leave you lightheaded that first night.
- You can take it with or without food. Swallow the capsule whole with water instead of opening, chewing, or crushing it.
- If you miss a bedtime dose, skip it and take the next one as usual. Never double up to catch up.
- Store it at room temperature, away from heat and damp, and out of reach of children and pets.

🔗 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Most people who respond notice fewer or milder nightmares within **1 to 2 weeks** of reaching the right amount.
- The starting amount is usually too low to help. Feeling nothing in the first week is normal and does not mean it will fail.
- Working looks like this: more nights slept through, less waking soaked in sweat, and a steadier feeling during the day.
- It does not help everyone. If nothing has changed after a fair trial at a full dose, say so and ask what else is worth trying.
- Nightmares usually return within a night or two if you stop, because this medicine clears your body quickly.

♥ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Dizziness when you stand up is the most common effect. Sit on the edge of the bed for a moment, then stand up slowly.
- Feeling drowsy or foggy in the morning often fades within a week or two. Tell your prescriber if it sticks around.
- A stuffy nose is common and harmless. A saline nasal spray at bedtime usually helps more than a decongestant.
- Headache in the first few days often settles on its own. Drinking enough water through the day helps.
- Needing to pass urine more often, or a dry mouth, can happen. Sips of water or sugar-free gum ease a dry mouth.
- Your heart may pound for a moment when you stand up. This usually eases as your body gets used to the medicine.

⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Call **911** if you faint, or if you fall and hit your head.
- An erection that lasts more than **4 hours** is an emergency. Go to the ER.
- Call your prescriber if you feel dizzy every time you stand, or if you have had a fall.
- Tell your eye surgeon you take **prazosin** before any cataract surgery.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Alcohol deepens the dizziness and raises your risk of falling, especially during the first few weeks on this medicine.
- Do not drive or use machines until you know how the first few doses affect you, and never right after a dose.
- Erection medicines such as sildenafil can drop your blood pressure too far alongside this one. Ask before you use them.
- Tell your prescriber about every blood pressure medicine, water pill, and cold remedy you take, including ones you buy yourself.
- If you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or hoping to be, talk it over with your prescriber before you keep taking it.

① STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Do not stop on your own. Nightmares can come back within a night or two, which feels like a setback but is not one.
- If you want to come off it, ask your prescriber to lower it in steps rather than quitting all at once.
- If you have missed several days in a row, call before restarting. You may need to begin again at the low starting amount.
- Many people stay on it for months or years. Staying on something that lets you sleep is a success, not a weakness.

❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Is my dose high enough, or is there still room to go up?
- How long should I give this before we decide it is not working?
- Does this clash with my blood pressure or heart medicines?
- What should I do if I feel dizzy every time I stand up?

Where this information comes from

MedlinePlus. (2023). *Prazosin*. National Library of Medicine. <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a682245.html>

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NOTE

Sources are listed in APA 7th edition style. This handout is general information about a medicine, not medical advice, and it does not replace the instructions from your own prescriber or pharmacist. Never start, change, or stop a medicine on your own. If you think you are having a serious reaction, call your prescriber; if you cannot breathe, cannot stay awake, or are thinking of harming yourself, call 911 or 988 right away.