

## Prazosin (say: praz-o-sin) for PTSD

### What is prazosin used for?

- Prazosin is usually used to treat high blood pressure, heart failure, Raynaud's disease and prostate problems
- It causes some blood vessels to relax and e.g. if they're in blood vessels, this reduces blood pressure
- Lower doses have also been found to help some symptoms of PTSD, especially sleep problems such as getting to sleep and nightmares
- It is available as tablets.

- ☞ If you have PTSD your body may release adrenaline, and this increases your heart rate and can cause you to feel stressed and have nightmares
- ☞ Prazosin seems to help by blocking the effects of this adrenaline
- ☞ Better sleep means you will feel much better and more able to cope with the symptoms
- ☞ It is usually used with psychological therapies to help you deal with the symptoms.

### What is the usual dose of prazosin?

- The usual dose for nightmares and sleep is lower than for high blood pressure and is usually around 1-10mg a day
- But it can be up to 5mg in the morning and 20mg at night (often a little lower in women).

### How should I take prazosin?

- The tablets should be swallowed with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing
- This is to make sure that they reach the stomach and do not stick in your throat.

### When should I take prazosin?

- Prazosin for PTSD is best taken at bedtime
- There is no problem about taking prazosin before, with or after food
- If the label says to take it twice a day this is usually best in mid-morning and at night.

### What are the alternatives to prazosin?

- There are many other medicines (e.g. SSRIs), therapies and treatments for PTSD.

- ☞ See our "Handy chart" for PTSD to help you compare the medicines available
- ☞ This will help you discuss your care with your doctor, case manager or pharmacist.

### How long will prazosin take to work?

- It usually takes a couple of weeks to work but can start in a few days.

### How long will I need to keep taking it for?

- Some people find that nightmares don't always come back when they stop prazosin, others that they need to take prazosin for several months or years
- Discuss this with your doctor.

### Is prazosin addictive and can I stop taking it suddenly?

- Prazosin is not a stimulant and not addictive
- It is unwise to stop taking prazosin suddenly
- Prazosin can reduce your blood pressure, and stopping it suddenly can lead to blood pressure going up quickly
- This can be quite dangerous
- When the time comes, prazosin should be stopped by slowly reducing the dose over several weeks
- You should discuss this fully with your doctor, case manager or pharmacist.

See our handy fact sheet on 'Coming off Medicines'

### What should I do if I forget to take a dose of prazosin for PTSD at the right time?

- If you forget the nighttime dose, you can take the dose until the early hours of the morning
- If you remember later than this then leave it until the next day
- Do not try to catch up by taking two doses at once as you may get more side-effects, especially feeling dizzy.

If you have problems remembering your doses (many people do) ask your pharmacist, doctor or case manager about this. Webster, other packs and Apps can help you.

### Will prazosin affect my other medication?

Prazosin has a few possible interactions with other medicines. The main ones include:

- The effects of prazosin might be increased by other drugs that reduce blood pressure
- You might feel dizzy and have lower blood pressure if also taking a PDE-5 inhibitor such as sildenafil (Viagra®), tadalafil or vardenafil

You must see the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflet for the full list of interactions. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you must follow your doctor's instructions carefully.



### Can I drink alcohol while taking prazosin?

- There should be no problems with alcohol, although excess alcohol can make PTSD worse.

### Will I need any blood or other tests if taking prazosin?

- You should not need a blood test while taking prazosin although your blood pressure will need to be checked.

### Can I cycle, sail or drive while taking prazosin?

- You may feel a bit light-headed at first when taking prazosin
- Until this wears off, or you know how it affects you, do not cycle, sail, drive or operate machines.

### What sort of side-effects might I get if I take prazosin?

The table below will show you some of the main side effects that you might get from prazosin and any you might need to take action on. These are less likely if you are taking a lower dose for PTSD rather than a higher dose for high blood pressure. You **must** also see the Consumer Medicine Information Leaflet (CMI) for the full list of possible side effects but do not be worried by this. Some people get no side effects at all. Others may get some that are not listed. Some side effects are the brain getting used to prazosin and these usually wear off in a few days or weeks. Starting at a lower dose may help. If you think you have a side effect to this medicine, you should ask your doctor, pharmacist or case manager.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
<b>VERY COMMON</b> ( <i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i> )		
Postural hypotension	You feel light-headed, dizzy and faint, especially when standing up	Do not try to stand up too quickly, and lie down when you feel it coming on. You should not cycle or drive. If this carries on please see your doctor as your blood pressure may be too low.
Fatigue	Feeling tired all the time. This may happen early on in treatment and should go away.	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting prazosin, tell your doctor. It may be possible to adjust your dose slightly. It should usually wear off.
Constipation	When you want to poop but can't (the opposite of diarrhoea). You can't pass a motion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat enough fibre, cereal or fruit</li> <li>• Drink enough fluid</li> <li>• Keep active and get some exercise e.g. walking.</li> </ul> If this does not help, ask your pharmacist for a mild laxative.
<b>COMMON</b> ( <i>fewer than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i> )		
Palpitations	A fast heartbeat.	It is not usually dangerous. It can easily be treated if it lasts a long time. Tell your doctor about it.
Blurred vision	Things look fuzzy and you can't focus properly.	Don't drive. See your doctor if you are worried.
Dry mouth	Not much saliva or spit.	Suck sugar-free gum or boiled sweets. If it is bad, your doctor may be able to give you a mouth spray.
Skin rashes	Red rashes on the skin, urticaria, pruritis (itching)	Discuss with your doctor next time you meet.
Headache	A painful head.	Try paracetamol. Your pharmacist will be able to advise if this is safe to take with any other medicines.
<b>RARE but important</b> ( <i>can be serious if not dealt with quickly</i> )		
Allergic reaction	Sudden difficulty in breathing or wheezing, swelling of the eyelids, face or lips, itching	See your doctor straight away. Don't take any more doses
Priapism	Men can get an erection lasting longer than 4 hours with no stimulus (also, very rarely, of the clitoris in women)	Although it would be embarrassing, you <b>MUST</b> seek treatment straight away. If it lasts more than about 10-15 hours it can cause damage to the penis and mean you might not be able to get an erection again.

**☎ Lifeline** provides 24hr telephone crisis support on 13 11 14 or visit [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au) for information & downloads

**The small print:** This leaflet is to help you understand about prazosin for PTSD. You **must** also read the manufacturer's Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) Leaflet. You may find more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else.

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