

Alpha Blockers (for Prostate / Urinary Flow)

WARWIKI

Patient Information · Pills that relax the outlet to improve urine flow

Alpha blockers are pills that **relax the muscle** in the prostate and bladder neck to make it easier to urinate — the usual first medicine for the urinary symptoms of an **enlarged prostate (BPH)**. Common ones are **tamsulosin (Flomax), alfuzosin, silodosin, doxazosin, and terazosin**. They work quickly but do not shrink the prostate.

How It Works

An enlarged prostate squeezes the urine channel. Alpha blockers **relax that muscle at the bladder outlet**, giving a stronger stream and less hesitancy, straining, and stop-start urinating. They treat the **symptoms** — they don't change the prostate's size, so the benefit lasts only while you take them.

What to Expect

- Improvement is usually **quick** — within days to a couple of weeks.
- Often taken **once a day**; tamsulosin is taken about **30 minutes after the same meal** each day.
- Doxazosin/terazosin are started **at bedtime** and increased slowly to limit dizziness.
- They can be combined with a prostate-shrinking medicine for larger prostates.

LEARN THE TERMS

Alpha blocker

A pill that relaxes the muscle at the bladder outlet.

BPH

Benign prostatic hyperplasia — an enlarged prostate.

Bladder neck

The muscular outlet where the bladder meets the urethra.

Retrograde ejaculation

Semen going backward into the bladder — harmless but less/no fluid.

Orthostatic hypotension

Dizziness from a blood-pressure drop on standing.

IFIS

A floppy-iris effect during cataract surgery — tell your eye surgeon.

HAVING CATARACT SURGERY? Tell your eye surgeon you take (or have ever taken) an alpha blocker — it can make the iris “floppy” during cataract surgery (IFIS), and they will plan for it. This matters **even if you have already stopped** the medicine.

How to Take It

- Take it **at the same time daily** as directed (tamsulosin ~30 min after a meal).
- With doxazosin/terazosin, take the **first dose at bedtime** and rise slowly — the first-dose drop in blood pressure can cause dizziness.
- Don't suddenly double up if you miss a dose.

Important Safety

- Stand up **slowly**, especially at first, to avoid lightheadedness or fainting.
- Use caution combining with **PDE5 inhibitors** or blood-pressure medicines (added dizziness).
- **Retrograde ejaculation** (dry or reduced ejaculate) is common with tamsulosin/silodosin — harmless and reversible if you stop.

Common Side Effects

- Dizziness or lightheadedness; tiredness
- Stuffy nose
- Reduced or “dry” ejaculation

Call your team or seek care if you have:

- **Fainting** or severe dizziness
- A fast or pounding heartbeat, or chest pain
- You **cannot urinate at all** (seek urgent care)

THREE THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. Alpha blockers quickly relax the bladder outlet to improve urine flow in BPH — they ease symptoms but don't shrink the prostate.
2. Stand up slowly early on (dizziness), and know that a dry/reduced ejaculate is common and harmless.
3. Always tell your **eye surgeon** before cataract surgery that you take or took an alpha blocker.