

Treating Enlarged Prostate (BPH): Which Drugs Work Best

What is an enlarged prostate?

The prostate makes the semen that carries sperm. It surrounds the urethra, the tube that carries urine out of the body. As men get older—especially older than age 50—the prostate gets larger. This is called prostate enlargement, or BPH (benign prostatic hyperplasia).

Why should I have my prostate checked?

When the prostate gets too large, it may pinch the urethra and block the flow of urine. This can make it difficult to urinate.

Over time, having BPH may also lead to more serious problems, like urinary-tract infections and kidney damage. It is important to see a doctor if you have any symptoms. The symptoms could also be signs of prostate cancer, even though that is not caused by BPH.

What are the symptoms of BPH?

The main symptoms of BPH happen when you urinate. They include needing to urinate more often, leaking urine, or not being able to go at all.

Some symptoms are less common, but more serious. Contact your doctor immediately if you have pain in your back, side, or abdomen, cloudy or bloody urine, or pain when urinating, especially if you also have fever or chills.

Can I relieve BPH without drugs?

Many men can relieve symptoms with lifestyle changes. Try these tips:

- Avoid antihistamines and decongestants.
- Drink less alcohol and caffeine.
- Drink less liquids before bedtime.
- Urinate, relax a moment, and go again.
- Urinate when you first feel the urge.

Prostate enlargement affects millions of men, including about half of men over age 55, three out of four men over age 65, and nine out of ten men by age 80.

When do I need drugs?

If symptoms don't improve after trying lifestyle changes, BPH drugs are the next step. With age, more men need to use these drugs. Talk to your doctor about which drug is best for you.

What are BPH drugs and their side effects?

There are two main groups of drugs used to treat BPH:

Alpha-blockers. These drugs make the muscles in your bladder relax. They work well to treat symptoms. They also work quickly, in a few days or weeks. And they cost less than other BPH drugs.


Possible side effects include dizziness, headache, stomach problems, and less semen during ejaculation.

5-alpha-reductase inhibitors. These drugs shrink the prostate by blocking a hormone. They may take 6 to 12 months to start working. They are best for men with very enlarged prostates. These drugs:

- May cause birth defects. Do not use them if you and your partner are planning a pregnancy. (Women should not handle these drugs.)
- May lower PSA levels. This can make it hard to check for prostate cancer.

Other side effects might be less desire for sex, not being able to maintain an erection, and ejaculation problems.

Our advice:


We compared cost, safety, and how well BPH drugs work. We chose this as our **Consumer Reports Best Buy Drug**:  The generic alpha-blocker **doxazosin** for a first treatment.



Drugs to Treat Enlarged Prostate

The *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drug* is in blue. We recommend this drug because it works as well and is as safe as the other drugs, and it costs less. The dollar symbol **\$** means certain drugs may cost less at large chain stores, like Costco, CVS, Kmart, Kroger, Sam's Club, Target, Walmart, and Walgreens through their discount generic drug programs. Some of these stores may have restrictions or charge a membership fee to enroll in the programs. Ask your pharmacist for details.

Our analysis is based on a scientific review by the Oregon Health and Science University-based Drug Effectiveness Review Project. This is a summary of a longer, more detailed report you can find at www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org.

Best Buy	Generic Name & Strength	Brand Name ^A	Pills per Day ^B	Average Cost per Month ^C
Alpha-Blockers				
	Alfuzosin 10 mg sustained-release tablet	Generic	One	\$82
	Alfuzosin 10 mg sustained-release tablet	Uroxatral	One	\$161
	Doxazosin 1 mg Tablet	Generic	One	\$8 \$
	Doxazosin 1 mg Tablet	Cardura	One	\$74
	Tamsulosin 0.4 mg continuous-delivery capsule	Generic	One	\$78
	Tamsulosin 0.4 mg continuous-delivery capsule	Flomax	One	\$183
	Terazosin 1 mg capsule	Generic	One	\$26 \$
5-Alpha-Reductase Inhibitors				
	Dutasteride 0.5 mg capsule	Avodart	One	\$146
	Finasteride 5 mg tablet	Generic	One	\$75

* Due to space limitations, this chart does not list all drugs to treat enlarged prostate. For a more complete list, see the full report at www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org.

^A "Generic" indicates that this drug is sold under its generic name.

^B As typically prescribed.

^C Prices are based on nationwide average retail prices for March 2012. *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* obtained prices from data provided by Source Healthcare Analytics, LLC., which is not involved in our analysis or recommendations.

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