

# Choosing the Right Ketamine Treatment:

## IM vs. SPRAVATO



### Understanding the Differences, Effects, and What to Expect

Ketamine is a fast-acting treatment option for people with depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other conditions. Two common forms—**Intramuscular (IM) ketamine** and **Spravato (nasal esketamine)**—offer different experiences and benefits.

This guide explains how they compare, what to expect, and how to make an informed choice with your care team.



## 1. Overview of Each Type

	INTRAMUSCULAR (IM) KETAMINE	SPRAVATO (NASAL ESKETAMINE)
<b>How It's Given</b>	Injection into a large muscle (usually arm or thigh)	Injection into a large muscle (usually arm or thigh)
<b>FDA Approval</b>	Off-label for mental health use	FDA-approved for treatment-resistant depression
<b>Onset</b>	3–10 minutes	15–40 minutes
<b>Duration</b>	40–75 minutes	About 1–2 hours
<b>Environment</b>	Quiet, private room with supervision	Clinical setting with monitoring for at least 2 hours
<b>Insurance Coverage</b>	Usually not covered; self-pay model	Often covered with prior authorization
<b>Regulations</b>	Administered in clinics under provider discretion	Must be done in a REMS-certified facility

## 2. When IM Might Be Preferred

- You're seeking **deep psychological insight** or somatic experiences
- You're doing **ketamine-assisted psychotherapy (KAP)**
- You want a **more immersive, inward experience** with fewer external stimuli
- You respond well to structured but flexible care models



## 3. When Spravato Might Be Preferred

- You need **insurance-covered treatment**
- You're looking for a **more moderate or less intense experience**
- You prefer a **routine medication protocol** with regular clinic visits
- You're comfortable in a **clinical setting** with staff supervision



## 4. Key Differences to Consider

### **INTENSITY OF EXPERIENCE**

- IM typically produces a **stronger dissociative effect** and inward journey.
- Spravato may feel **more gradual**, sometimes subtler, though still significant.

**IM** often produces a dreamlike or altered state where speech may feel unnecessary or difficult. **Spravato** tends to be milder, and many patients remain conversational and more alert.

## TREATMENT FLEXIBILITY

- IM allows for **individualized doses** and integration-focused models.
- Spravato follows a **standardized dosing protocol** regulated by the REMS program, which may limit provider flexibility.

## SESSION STRUCTURE

- IM is often combined with **psychotherapy before, during, or after**.
- Spravato requires **monitoring but often no talk therapy during the session**.

## TREATMENT FREQUENCY

- **Spravato** is usually administered **twice per week for the first month**, then weekly or biweekly for maintenance.
- **IM ketamine** schedules vary based on the individual's response and therapeutic goals, often **weekly or every 10–14 days**.

## RECOVERY TIME

You should not drive or operate machinery for at least **24 hours** after either treatment. Many people feel foggy, emotionally open, or physically tired afterward. Plan ahead for rest and safe transportation.

## 5. Safety and Screening

Both forms require a medical screening to ensure they're safe for you. This may include:

- Blood pressure checks
- Medication review
- Mental health history (including psychosis risk)
- Substance use history



Your provider will also explain:

- Common physical effects (nausea, dizziness, disorientation)
- What support will be available during and after the session
- How to plan for recovery, transportation, and follow-up appointments

## 6. Not Sure Which to Choose?

Talk with your provider about:

- Your goals for treatment (relief, insight, processing trauma, etc.)
- How comfortable you are with dissociation or altered states
- Insurance and financial concerns
- Your past experiences with medication or therapy



Spravato must be prescribed and administered in a REMS-certified facility by a licensed provider with a DEA registration for Schedule III substances. IM ketamine is administered off-label by qualified providers in outpatient clinics.

If you're interested in psychotherapy or deeper emotional work, ask whether your clinic offers **integration support** or ketamine-assisted psychotherapy.

### NEED MORE GUIDANCE?

Paperflower Psychiatry offers both IM ketamine and Spravato. Our team is here to help you explore your options and feel supported every step of the way.

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