



WHAT HAPPENS DURING KETAMINE TREATMENT

A practical guide for people curious about the process



GETTING STARTED: THE SCREENING PROCESS



Before beginning ketamine treatment, you'll meet with a provider for a full medical and psychiatric evaluation. This helps ensure that ketamine is safe and appropriate for your specific needs. You'll be asked about your medical history, mental health background, medications, and any history of psychosis, mania, or substance use.



SETTING MATTERS



Ketamine treatment takes place in a safe, controlled setting with trained staff nearby. Clinics are typically quiet, dimly lit, and designed to help clients feel calm and supported. A provider or therapist may stay in the room during the experience, depending on the clinic's protocol and your preference.



HOW IT'S GIVEN



There are two main formats:

- **Intramuscular (IM) Injection:**

A small shot in the arm or thigh. Effects begin within minutes and last about 40–90 minutes. You'll remain in the clinic the whole time. IM ketamine is considered off-label for mental health and typically paid out-of-pocket, though some insurance plans may reimburse a portion.

- **Spravato (Esketamine Nasal Spray):**

Administered under supervision in a REMS-certified clinic. You stay on-site for 2+ hours after using the spray, per FDA safety rules. Spravato is FDA-approved and may be covered by insurance depending on your plan.

Neither format involves being "put under." You're awake, but your thoughts may feel spacious, slowed, or different from usual.





WHAT YOU MIGHT FEEL



Responses vary. Some people feel detached from their body or surroundings (dissociation). Others feel emotionally open or experience vivid mental imagery. Common experiences include:

- A dreamlike or floating sensation
- A shift in how time feels
- Changes in how thoughts or emotions are processed
- A sense of clarity, calm, or unexpected insight
- Physical stillness or relaxation

It's also normal to feel confused, uncomfortable, or emotional. These effects are temporary and usually fade within a few hours.

Common physical side effects include:

- Nausea or dizziness
- Muscle stiffness or fatigue
- Blurry vision or mild headache

Most symptoms resolve on their own. Clinics may offer anti-nausea medication if needed.



RISKS AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS



Though rare, ketamine can cause elevated blood pressure, disorientation, or emotional distress during treatment. You'll be closely monitored during your session, and trained staff can respond if anything feels uncomfortable or unsafe.

Ketamine is not recommended for people with uncontrolled hypertension, certain heart conditions, a history of psychosis, or unstable substance use. Your provider will help assess risks and safety before starting treatment.



AFTER THE SESSION



Most people spend time resting quietly or journaling before going home. Clinics require that someone else drive you or pick you up — no driving for 24 hours.

Many find the hours or days after a session to be an ideal time for reflection, integration, or therapy. Not every session feels profound, but the effects may build over time.

Some clinics offer integration sessions to help you process what came up during treatment. This support can help reinforce the emotional or cognitive shifts that ketamine can make possible.

WHAT TO BRING OR PREPARE

- Wear comfy clothes
- Eat a light meal a few hours before your session
- Bring a trusted support person to drive you home
- Optional: eye mask, blanket, playlist (if clinic allows), journal
- Avoid alcohol, cannabis, and sedating meds before and after



HOW OFTEN DO PEOPLE GO?

- **IM ketamine:** Often begins with 1–2 sessions/week for a few weeks
- **Spravato:** Usually 2x/week for the first month, then tapers down

Maintenance plans vary. Some people pause after initial relief, while others continue with occasional booster sessions based on how they're feeling.

IS THIS RIGHT FOR ME?

Ketamine may be worth exploring if:

- You've tried multiple medications without relief
- You feel stuck in patterns of depression, disconnection, or distress
- Suicidal thoughts persist despite therapy or support
- You're curious about new approaches and willing to explore under guidance

If you're unsure, a consultation can help clarify whether this is the right fit.

FINAL NOTE

You don't have to have a "breakthrough" every time. Ketamine is a tool that works differently for different people. The goal isn't to chase an experience. It's to create space for something in your system to shift — gently, over time, in a way that supports your healing.



Reach out to a qualified provider in Paperflower Psychiatry for an assessment and a no-pressure conversation about whether ketamine treatment may be a good fit.