

# Ketamine Treatment Preparation Guide



A Swahn Balanced Health Booklet

## Why is preparation important?

Ketamine is a powerful molecule that can create experiences in the mind that you may have considered impossible. It can alter your perception of yourself, the world, and even reality. Many people feel they have profound mystical experiences they treasure for the rest of their lives where insights are gained, suppressed trauma is released, or universal truths are revealed. Sometimes the experience can be strange, frightening, or overwhelming. For these reasons, it is important to prepare both your body and mind prior to receiving your ketamine treatment. This can include making sure you get enough sleep, avoiding substances such as alcohol or caffeine before your treatment, and making every effort to put yourself in a positive mindset.

## What can I do to prepare?

### Set and Setting

Though the experiences described above are not experienced by everyone and are dependent on dose and individual response, the potential exists for your experience to be positive or negative depending on set and setting.

Set refers to your mindset, and only you can ensure you are in an optimal mindset. Setting refers to the environment you are in during the experience. We provide a peaceful, comfortable area for you to feel safe and relaxed throughout your experience. To see photos of our rooms and clinic, navigate to the "About Us" tab on our website. You may bring a trusted person who has a soothing influence on you to be with you during your treatment. We find that most clients prefer to be alone, as this tends to be a very internal experience. You may also play music on a personal device or we can provide music for you. Every room is equipped with a speaker, headphones, and a selection of therapeutic playlists curated by our team for your experience. Eye coverings are available in every room as well. Wear comfortable clothing the day of your appointment and consider dressing in layers. You may also bring a personal pillow and blanket if you prefer, or you may use the blankets and pillows that we provide in each room. If there are other personal items that bring you comfort, you are more than welcome to bring them along.

Before your appointment...

Before your treatment, avoid substances, activities, and items which can negatively impact your mind and body. Take your prescribed medications as ordered, but try to avoid other stimulants and depressants as this could alter your experience. If you regularly consume a lot of caffeine and have withdrawal headaches without it, consider a smaller amount the day of your

treatment, such as a cup of tea instead of coffee. Avoid watching TV shows and movies with excessive amounts of violence or consuming negative news that increases your stress. Making every effort to stay in a positive mindset is always important, but is especially vital before and after receiving treatment.

Be cognizant of what you drink, eat, watch, and read as all of this can affect your body and mind. A small, healthy, protein-packed meal 1-4 hours prior to treatment helps maintain stable blood sugar levels and can reduce the potential for nausea. We also offer nausea meds before getting you started if needed.

## How do I make the most of my experience?

Ketamine, a dissociative anesthetic, is often grouped with the class of drugs known as “psychedelics” due to their profound cognitive effects. One effective way to utilize ketamine therapy is to integrate it with psychotherapy. This helps integrate the experience with professional guidance. Incorporating psychotherapy before or after ketamine treatments can help patients prepare for their mental journeys, create intentions, learn grounding skills to use during treatment, and integrate their experiences after each session. It should be noted that our clinic does not provide psychotherapists as a part of our services at this time.

Personal practice of meditation can be useful prior to the treatment to help develop the ability to quiet your thoughts, mindfully observe your present moment, and ground yourself during the experience. It is helpful to reflect on your thoughts and feelings before the experience and to identify what your hopes are for treatment. Using a journal to record your thoughts can be a therapeutic practice in itself but is highly recommended during this transformative time to help you remember your insights before, during, and after therapy.

Before each infusion, it is beneficial to set an intention. Your intention doesn't need to be complicated and can be goals for therapy, feelings you want to explore, ways you want to live your life better, or whatever you want it to be. “I want to understand my mind better,” “be more loving,” and “surrender to the experience” are all valid intentions. Keep in mind that the simpler your intention is, the better you'll be able to remember it during treatment. Having an intention set ahead of time may provide an anchor in the event you experience something difficult or challenging. Most individuals who experience anxiety or fear during their experience find relief and greater insight if they just surrender to the experience. We will address any distress you may experience and have medications available, but the most effective therapeutic intervention is often to encourage you to “let go and float downstream, see where your thoughts take you, and be open to what the experience reveals.” You did all the preparation and planning ahead of time, so now you can relax and enjoy.

If you are currently working with a therapist, one option for our treatments is ketamine-assisted psychotherapy sessions. You may work out a time with your therapist to come in with you, and we will be happy to work with you from there. The dissociative state produced by the ketamine is utilized to work through emotional or psychological barriers encountered during previous sessions. If you wish, you have the option to have a member of our trained staff sit with you during the experience to help put you at ease.

## How does ketamine work?

Ketamine is primarily an NMDA receptor antagonist. When ketamine enters the bloodstream, it slows down neuron activity in the brain and increases neuroplasticity at the same time. To understand how this works, there are a few things we'd like to lay out for you...

Ketamine boosts overall activity in the prefrontal cortex, mostly due to its NMDA receptor blockade. By blocking these receptors, ketamine decreases the activity of inhibitory neurons while increasing the activity of excitatory neurons. This process strengthens the connections between excitatory neurons and encourages neuroplasticity.

Excitatory neurotransmitters stimulate neuron firing, while inhibitory neurotransmitters suppress it. Since ketamine enhances the activity of excitatory neurotransmitters, the brain has the potential to form new neural pathways and thought patterns. Many mental health conditions, such as depression, PTSD, and anxiety, are characterized by cycles of negative thinking. Patients can establish new, more positive ways of thinking by engaging in integration methods like talk therapy, meditation, and mindfulness practices after treatment. These integration methods can make a night and day difference post-treatment, so we highly recommend that patients utilize them as part of their treatment plan.

## What happens after my treatment?

After your treatment, you may experience fatigue, weakness, and/or slight dizziness for a couple hours. You will not be capable of operating a vehicle the rest of the day and MUST have someone available to transport you after treatment. Under Utah law, you are prohibited from operating a vehicle while impaired, and you will be required to sign a contract stating that you understand this before receiving treatment. If need be, you may order an Uber or Lyft with the help of a member of our staff. Within 12 hours, you should return to functioning normally.

Ketamine produces a dissociative effect, meaning you are removed from your usual state of mind and perspective. You may experience emotions and feelings that have been buried or suppressed. This more vulnerable, emotional state can last for several days as your mind is forming new connections and releasing stored information.

Integrating your experience into your life is a critical step. What insights did you gain? Did you learn anything about yourself, your problems, or your relationships? How has your perspective changed? Self-reflection and writing in your journal as soon as possible after your infusion (or even during if you are able or have someone to take notes for you) is the best way to capture and retain all the insights from your experience. You can then work to make changes in your life based on the new knowledge.

After your treatment is a perfect time to set new intentions for your life and to act on positive insights. Take advantage of this time by surrounding yourself with people and things that will lift your mood. Major life changes are common after such a profound experience, but any drastic changes should be considered carefully at least 48 hours after the treatment to ensure the effects of the medication have worn off and you have fully returned to sound decision-making capacity. If you are working with a therapist, try to plan an appointment with them the day after your infusion so they can help you integrate the experience and to maximize the benefits.

If you have any questions about these treatments or our clinic, please feel free to give us a call at (801) 613-8842.