

Ketamine Treatment for Depression

Ketamine is an anesthetic drug used to treat major depression if other medicines have not helped. Ketamine is a clear, colorless fluid that goes into your body through an IV.

Before Ketamine Treatment

Please be sure to tell your doctor if you:

- Have any heart problems
- Have blood pressure problems
- Have glaucoma
- Are taking a monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI).

Preparing for Treatment

Your doctor will explain the benefits and risks of this treatment and why it is an option for you. If you choose to have ketamine treatments, you must first sign a consent form.

Talk with your doctor to decide which medicines should not be taken the morning of the treatment. You should not eat or drink anything after midnight before your ketamine treatment.

Day of Treatment

You will be asked to empty your bladder before the treatment. You will have an IV started. You will be taken to the room where you will receive the treatment. Once there, doctors and nurses trained to give ketamine will care for you.

You will be in a room with gentle lights and a comfortable temperature. Please let your nurse know if there is something we can do to make you more comfortable.

Your heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen level will be checked every 10 minutes during the infusion. Ketamine will be added to your IV where it will drip for about 40 minutes. You might fall asleep or be in a relaxed state during the treatment. You may have mild hallucinations or feel like you are having an “out of body” experience. These experiences are mild and end as soon as the infusion is over.

Your pulse and blood pressure will be measured for another 30 minutes after the infusion is over. Once you are stable and more awake after your treatment, you will be discharged home or returned to your unit.

After Treatment

It is normal to be tired or want to sleep after the treatment. You may feel strange or slightly confused when you wake up. Please tell your nurse if these feelings are unpleasant. Ketamine may impair your thinking or reactions for a few hours.

For the next 24 hours:

- **No** driving or using heavy machinery
- **No** alcohol

While the full benefits of ketamine may take days to several weeks to achieve, some patients report a sense of well-being or notice an improvement in their depression right away.

Common Side Effects

These are some common side effects that should resolve shortly after the treatment:

- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Changes in blood pressure or heart rate

Rare Side Effects

Tell your provider right away if you have any of these rare side effects:

- Thoughts of harming self or others
- Severe confusion
- Hallucinations
- Disturbing or scary thoughts

Treatment Plan

Most patients will receive 6 treatments over 2 to 3 weeks. After that, you will need to follow up with your doctor. Your doctor may prescribe more treatments based on your response. Talk to your doctor often to let them know how your symptoms are doing and what side effects you are having.

Resources

To find out more about this treatment, please ask your doctor or nurse. We want you to understand your treatment and are here to help you.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 6/2024 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#8200.