

SWAHN BALANCED HEALTH

Optimize your life through balanced mind and body



Ketamine Therapy Preparation Guide

Why is preparation important?

Ketamine is a powerful molecule that can create experiences in the mind that the user may have considered impossible. It can alter your perception of yourself, the world, and even reality. Many people feel they have profound mystical experiences, ones they treasure for the rest of their lives. Experiences may include gaining new insights, releasing suppressed trauma, or a feeling that universal truths were revealed, but 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 and avoid substances such as alcohol before your treatment, but also that you make every effort to put yourself in a positive mindset.

What can I do to prepare?

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. Ketamine's physiologic effects can cause beneficial response regardless of the experience, but the greatest response is had when the physiologic benefits come with a cathartic psychologic experience. We provide a peaceful, comfortable area for you to feel safe and relaxed in a comfortable recliner and a personal room with soft, warm lighting. You may bring a trusted person who has a soothing influence on you to be with you during your treatment. The most beneficial experience is had while wearing comfortable headphones, a

full blackout eye mask, and listening to vibrational meditation music. This helps you tune out from the world and takes you on a healing journey inside your own mind. Most people play music on a personal device, but we can also provide music for you. When choosing your music, it is helpful to consider what music you find soothing or meaningful ahead of time. Keep in mind that in the altered state of consciousness of the ketamine experience, music will have a decisive impact on your experience and even familiar music will sound and feel remarkably different. Positive, soothing music is one of the most critical keys to a beneficial experience. 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.

Before your treatment, avoid substances, activities, and items which can negatively impact your mind and body. Take your prescribed medications as ordered, with the exception of benzodiazepines as these result in increased sedation and limit the benefits of ketamine treatment, so they should be avoided the day of treatment if possible. Alcohol has a similar effect and should be avoided for 24 hours prior to treatment. Avoid excessive use of caffeine or other stimulants the day of treatment as this could alter your experience. Avoid watching TV shows and movies with excessive amounts of violence or consuming negative news that increases your stress. Be cognizant of what you drink, eat, watch, and read as all of this can affect your body and mind.

How do I make the most of my experience?

Ketamine is often grouped with the class of drugs known as “psychedelics,” which originates from the Greek words for psyche (meaning soul or mind) and deloun (to manifest), due to their profound cognitive effects. The best way to utilize ketamine therapy is to integrate it with psychotherapy. This helps integrate the experience with professional guidance and is why we partnered with the team of therapists at the Divine Awakening Center. We fully recommend participating in

ketamine-assisted psychotherapy and our team works with each individual to determine the most effective way to use this tool.

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 after each treatment 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 derived from your goals for therapy, feelings you want to explore, ways you want to live your life better, or whatever you feel is important. "I want to understand my mind better," "be more loving," and "surrender to the experience" are all valid intentions. 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 can remember to surrender to the experience, as the anxiety almost always stems from struggling to let go of control. We will address any distress you may experience, but the most effective therapeutic intervention is 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 is the time to relax and enjoy.

If you are working with a therapist, one option for treatment is ketamine-assisted psychotherapy sessions where the dissociative state produced by the medication is utilized to work through emotional or psychological barriers encountered during previous sessions. This is achieved with a lower dose infusion so you maintain the ability to communicate effectively during your therapy session.

What happens after my treatment?

After your treatment, you are ready to integrate the experience into your life. 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 treatment is a perfect time to set new intentions for your life and to act on positive insights. Major life changes are common after such a profound experience, but any drastic changes should be considered carefully for the 48 hours after infusion 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, you should plan to have an appointment with them anywhere from a few hours after your treatment to the next day or so after so they can help you integrate the experience and maximize the benefits.