



Ketamine

Ketamine stands apart from similar medicines because of its unique properties and position within the world of psychedelics. Its effects are a combination of qualities similar to other psychedelic and natural medicines—it's an analgesic like cannabis, an anesthetic like kambo, can have euphoric effects like MDMA, and induces deep visionary experiences like ibogaine or ayahuasca.

Acquired through a prescription from your doctor, ketamine is also the only legally available psychedelic in the U.S. Ketamine has been used since the 1960's for its properties as a powerful anesthetic and was originally utilized in emergency operation rooms and on battlefields. Whereas most psychedelics have been villainized for the better part of the last century, ketamine is included on the World Health Organization's List of Essential Medicines.

And it's perhaps the most promising medicine available to treat acute depression. In addition to its psychedelic and empathogenic qualities—which can help patients [uncover the root cause of their depression](#)—ketamine catalyzes unique chemical reactions in the brain that balance neurological systems associated with depression. While conventional antidepressants may take weeks to begin working, ketamine acts almost immediately and has been used clinically to quickly stop major depressive or suicidal episodes.

What Is Ketamine?

Ketamine, or ketamine hydrochloride, is a dissociative anesthetic—it makes you less sensitive to pain while simultaneously inducing a sense of disconnection between mind and body. In its pure form, ketamine is a water-soluble crystal which can be injected or taken orally. Its effects usually last about an hour, although an individual may feel lingering effects for several days afterward.

When ketamine takes effect in the brain, there is an electrophysiological disconnect between the thalamo-neocortical and limbic systems—parts of the brain associated with the physical senses, motor function, consciousness, memory, and emotions. This induces a trance-like state similar to what one might experience in a sensory deprivation tank; it's commonly described with words like “floating” or “dreamy.” Ketamine also interacts with opioid and dopamine receptors in the brain, which helps explain its neurological properties as a powerful antidepressant.

Benefits of Ketamine

Studies have shown ketamine to have a spectrum of properties that make it ideal for preparing people for major operations and treating psychoemotional diseases like depression, anxiety, and PTSD:

- Anesthetic
- Analgesic (eases pain)
- Neuroprotective (prevents brain damage)
- Antidepressant
- Anxiolytic (eases anxiety)
- Dissociates body from mind, causing a feeling of disconnection from your environment
- Can cause out-of-body, euphoric, and visionary experiences at medium doses
- Can cause ego dissolution and short-term memory loss at high doses

At lower doses, ketamine has [empathogenic effects similar to MDMA](#), which suggests that, under the guidance of a therapist, ketamine could similarly be used to safely revisit long-held psychic trauma. At higher doses, it creates vivid imagery and “form-of-life review” (replaying memories from your past as though watching a film reel) [reminiscent of ibogaine](#) and ayahuasca—providing the opportunity for deep, transpersonal experiences that can break depressive and anxious mental cycles.

Safe Usage

Any positive psychedelic experience requires proper set and setting, but this is particularly true for ketamine. Because of its dissociative properties at higher doses, ketamine can cause incoordination and difficulty moving, so it's critical that you take it in a safe environment. Also keep in mind that different doses invoke different effects, so talk with a trained therapist to determine what dose is best for you. And while research hasn't determined if ketamine is biochemically addictive, there is the possibility of dependence with regular or continuous use. For these reasons, ketamine should only be used in a controlled setting with a certified practitioner.

When used responsibly in a clinical environment, ketamine can be a literal life-saver for people struggling with severe depression and suicidal thoughts. Ketamine has shown an outstanding ability to break negative mental ruminations by effectively taking people out of their environment and lifting the weight of depression and anxiety.

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