



Here's Why You Should Consider Ketamine Infusion Therapy for PTSD

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PTSD is chronic, disabling, and common. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), as many as [8 million adult Americans](#) suffer from this disorder, which is [characterized by hyperarousal, flashbacks, and avoidance symptoms](#). PTSD is difficult to treat, but emerging research suggests that ketamine infusion therapy, which has already been shown to drastically [reduce depression](#) symptoms and suicidal thoughts, can also bring great relief for patients suffering from PTSD symptoms.

Ketamine for Depression

Ketamine is an anesthetic drug that has been in use since 1968, when it first made an appearance in as an anesthetic and analgesic during the Vietnam War. In [a 2000 study published in the journal Biological](#)

[Psychiatry](#), researchers first investigated ketamine's potential as a treatment for depression. Studies have found that an IV infusion of ketamine can eliminate depression symptoms and reduce suicidal thoughts in as little as 24 hours.

Because ketamine infusion for depression affects the brain in a different way than traditional antidepressants, the treatment is ideal for the [30 to 40 percent](#) of patients who experience little to no benefit from conventional depression treatments. Ketamine infusion has also been implemented in emergency rooms as a new, but effective and safe, way to reduce suicidal thoughts and impulses. Thanks to ketamine infusion therapy, [ER doctors](#) now have a way to help keep suicidal patients from hurting themselves long enough to help them access resources and get the help they need.

Ketamine Infusion Therapy for PTSD

PTSD can affect anyone who lives through a traumatic experience, such as abuse, sexual assault, combat, a terrorist attack, an accident, or a natural disaster. That's why so many millions of Americans suffer from the disorder. PTSD symptoms can be debilitating for those who suffer from them, and most pharmacological treatments have little effect.

That's where ketamine infusion therapy comes in. [A study published last year](#) in the journal JAMA Psychiatry found that an IV infusion of ketamine could bring about rapid and substantial improvement in PTSD symptoms. The study involved 41 patients aged 18 to 55 who had been diagnosed with PTSD and scored at least a 50 on the [Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale \(CAPS\)](#). The study participants had not taken any psychotropic medications for at least two weeks prior to the commencement of the study and did not take any such medications throughout the length of the study.

Study participants received two [IV infusions of either ketamine](#) or midazolam, an active placebo chosen for its ability to mimic the side effects of ketamine without influencing behavior. The infusions were administered two weeks apart, and each treatment session lasted about 40 minutes. Patients were asked to rate the severity of their PTSD symptoms at intervals of 24 hours, 48 hours, 72 hours, and seven days after receiving an infusion. Those patients who received ketamine infusions demonstrated significant improvement in their PTSD symptoms as long as two weeks later.

Ketamine, Glutamate, and PTSD

Many pharmaceuticals used to treat depression, PTSD, and [anxiety disorders](#) are serotonergic, meaning that they enhance the effects of the neurotransmitter serotonin in the brain. Ketamine is different. It works on the neurotransmitter glutamate, which is responsible for the excitation response and also plays a role in learning and memory.

People with PTSD suffer from hyperarousal symptoms that leave them feeling constantly on edge, tense, and vigilant. They may have problems sleeping and may find it impossible to relax. PTSD symptoms also include the inability to extinguish unpleasant memories of the traumatic event.

By enhancing the effects of the neurotransmitter glutamate, ketamine infusion therapy may help to squelch the fear response, allowing the brain to let go of traumatic memories, and breaking the cycle of flashbacks and avoidance symptoms. Increased glutamate function may also have a calming effect, soothing hyperarousal and allowing people with PTSD to finally relax. Ketamine infusion therapy can reduce the risk of PTSD-related suicide by inhibiting suicidal thoughts. For the 30 to 40 percent of PTSD patients who also suffer from depression, ketamine infusion therapy may also bring relief from depression symptoms.

If you or someone you know is suffering from PTSD symptoms, you're not alone. PTSD is a common and debilitating condition that is difficult to treat through conventional treatment. But new evidence suggests that an emerging depression treatment — ketamine infusion therapy — is also effective for the treatment of PTSD.