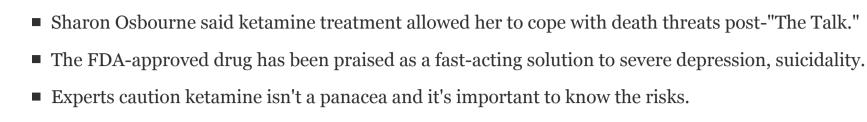
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**HEALTH AND WELLNESS** 

# Sharon Osbourne says ketamine helped her depression. Is this the next big trend?



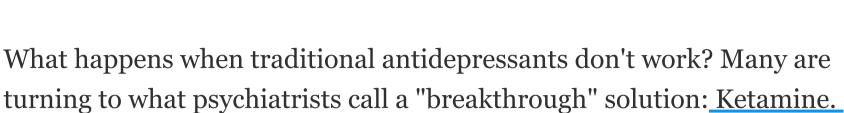
**Key Points** 



Hear this story

■ Experts caution ketamine isn't a panacea and it's important to know the risks.

Published 10:25 a.m. ET July 8, 2022 | Updated 11:56 a.m. ET July 8, 2022





that I felt. All of that, it's gone."

- Since the 1970s, researchers have studied the hallucinogenic drug as a promising treatment for severe depression. Its safety and
- efficacy have been widely analyzed in numerous clinical trials, and the controversial practice has even earned praise from high-profile celebrities

social media criticism following her much-discussed exit from "The Talk."

"I went through three months of therapy," Osbourne said in September. "I

had ketamine treatment and I got it all out. All the tears and everything

like Sharon Osbourne, who recently credited ketamine for coping with

'I'm angry. I'm hurt.': Sharon Osbourne speaks out after exiting 'The Talk' in racial controversy

persistent depression. "There are lots of patients who are frightened of ketamine. They had potentially first heard about the drug as a drug of abuse so they're not sure if it can be given safely," says Dr. Amanda Itzkoff, a psychiatrist and CEO of Curated Mental Health, a psychiatry practice making psychedelic-assisted mental health services accessible. "But in a safe medical setting, it's an excellent drug." How does ketamine work as an antidepressant?

alternative antidepressant treatments failed).

Ketamine is often stigmatized due to its bad reputation

presents a life-changing solution for those who haven't

responded to conventional medications. A hallmark

supported ketamine's high rate of success in treating

as the party drug "Special K" when abused. But in a

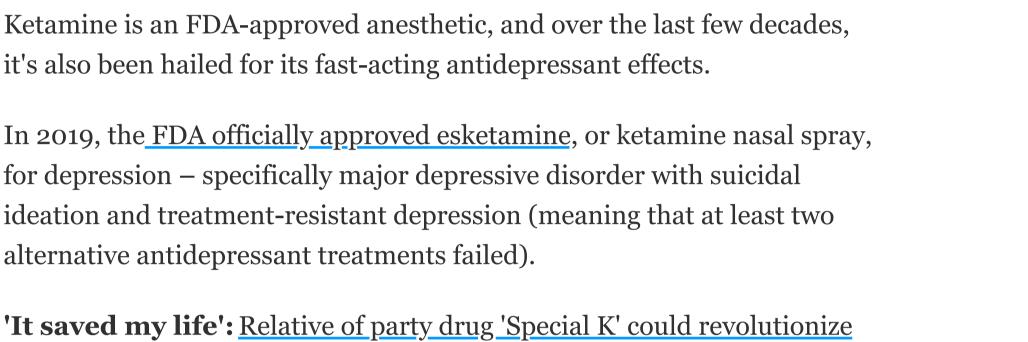
controlled medical setting, psychiatrists say it

study published in 2000 brought widespread

effects, and more recent studies have

attention to its antidepressant and anti-suicidal

depression treatment Dr. Nolan Williams, an assistant professor in Stanford University's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, says it's unclear exactly how ketamine affects mood, because "there are many mechanisms happening at once." But rather than affecting dopamine or serotonin, neuroscience studies show that ketamine instead



"I went through three months of therapy,"

Monty Brinton, CBS

Osbourne said in a September interview. "I had

ketamine treatment and I got it all out. All the tears and everything that I felt, you know. All of that, it's gone."



Some experts have also speculated that the dissociative experience of a

mood, Dr. Alexander Papp, a board-certified psychiatrist and voluntary

clinical professor at UC San Diego, says some of his patients have credited

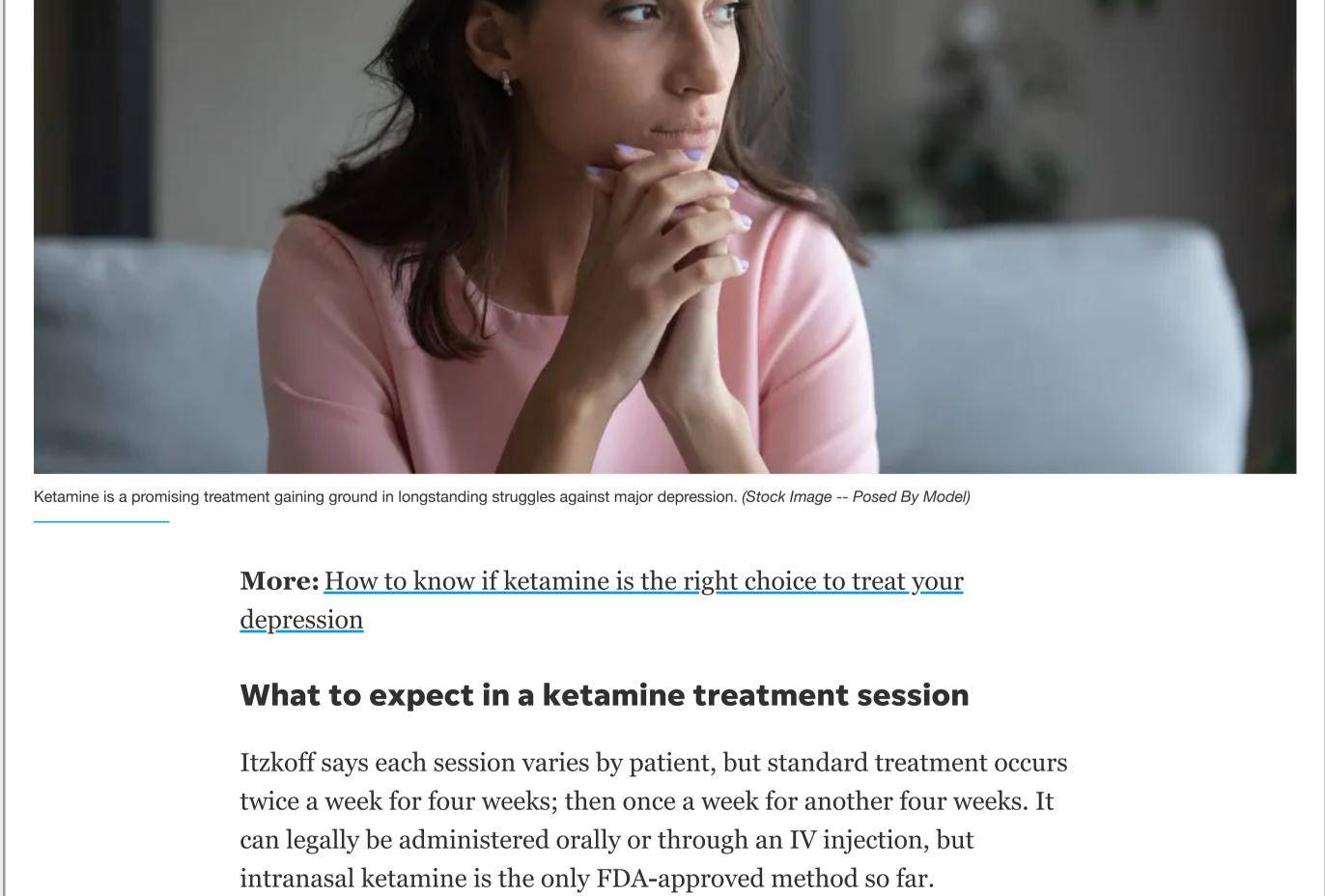
"Some patients close their eyes and all they see is nothing, yet they still get

symptoms. Though there's no evidence that the trip directly affects

ketamine's psychedelic properties to their improved outlook on life.

ketamine "trip" may be responsible for reducing depressive

the antidepressant effect," Papp says. "But also ... people have said the trip helps them come to important understandings of themselves or relationships. So it's not an absolutely necessary component, but it can be a useful addition for the treatment."



have a very controlled, very safe setting," Itzkoff says. In order to keep the patient comfortable, she adds that she will offer to "dim the lights, prepare music, or give them eye shades ... because ketamine can cause patients to

does not involve or require psychotherapy."

feel a bit dizzy."

During the session, people often experience an altered, trance-like trip

"When (patients) are in a very vulnerable state, we're often trying to help

them access different types of feelings. That is most easily done when you

However, Williams explains "the FDA-approved procedure for esketamine

"We can't say for sure if it is helpful or not helpful," he says. "If you look

more generally, psychotherapy tends to be helpful but saying that

that lasts approximately one or two hours. They may also be guided

with talk therapy, also known as ketamine-assisted therapy (KAT).

psychotherapy on its own is necessary or psychotherapy definitively combined with ketamine is necessary – it's not a known thing." The unique benefits of ketamine One of ketamine's greatest benefits is that it works almost immediately – critical for those at imminent risk of suicidal behavior.

"A relatively large percentage of people actually report their mood feels

better within hours after taking the drug," says Dr. Gerard Sanacora,

director of the Yale Depression Research Program and co-director of

Yale New Haven Hospital Interventional Psychiatry Service. "And that's

what we would consider a very good prognostic indicator, which is a fancy

way of saying if you start to feel better within hours or within a day, that's

### a good sign you're going to continue to feel better." So far, research shows it has a high rate of success; A meta-analysis

study conducted by Sanacora and his team in 2017 found that a single dose

rapidly reduced suicidal ideation within a day in over half of participants

with treatment-resistant depression. In addition, ketamine may function as a safe alternative for those who experience undesirable side effects from traditional SSRIs, like restlessness or reduced sexual desire.

"If you're taking antidepressants daily, the reason people have side effects

is because that drug is in there. They have a blood level of that drug every

"When patients receive ketamine, they don't maintain a level of the drug

day and that's what's necessary for the drug to work," Itzkoff explains.

for very long." Ketamine is not a panacea Despite its promise, ketamine is not a miracle drug. Along with side

## effects including nausea and spikes in blood pressure, experts caution it can be life-threatening to those with cardiovascular issues. Some

body experience accompanying a ketamine trip.

psychiatrists also worry about its high potential for misuse. Johnny Depp, Amber Heard: and when recreational substance use turns toxic

Sanacora also warns not everyone will be equipped to handle the out-of-

"Things may look different, sound different, feel different. You can feel like you're floating and it can be pretty frightening to some people if they're not

prepared for that," he says. While much research has supported the treatment, less is known about its long-term efficacy for depression, which is why it's important to have

effect. "We only know as far as the studies go," Williams says.

more longitudinal studies about the permanence of its antidepressant

The next big trend in mental health?: Psychedelic therapy. Here's what you should know