



KETAMINE: What Flight Attendants Should Know

Understanding its Use, Effects, and Workplace Implications

Presented by AFA EAP / Professional Standards

What is Ketamine?

Ketamine is a dissociative anesthetic that has been used for decades in medical settings for surgery and pain management. More recently, it has gained attention for its off-label use in treating depression and PTSD, often when other treatments have failed. Ketamine is administered in clinics under medical supervision, usually through intravenous (IV) infusions, nasal spray (esketamine), or intramuscular injection.

Why Are People Talking About It?

Mental health care providers are exploring new treatment options for conditions like treatment-resistant depression. In some cases, ketamine can offer rapid relief from severe symptoms. However, this doesn't mean it's without risks or that it's right for everyone.

Is It Legal?

Yes—ketamine is a Schedule III controlled substance in the U.S., meaning it has accepted medical uses but also potential for misuse. Only licensed providers can administer it. The nasal spray version, Spravato (esketamine), is FDA-approved for depression and is used in certified clinics.

Short-term effects include:

- Altered perception of time and space
- Detachment from surroundings or body
- Mild hallucinations
- Drowsiness and dizziness
- Elevated heart rate and blood pressure

Safety-Sensitive Implications for Flight Attendants

As a DOT-regulated, safety-sensitive employee, you must be fit for duty at all times. This includes residual impairment that results from returning to work too soon after treatment.

Need Support?

Your AFA EAP/Professional Standards Committee is here to help—confidentially and without judgment. Whether you're exploring mental health treatment, facing challenges with a coworker, or unsure about a medication, you don't have to go it alone. Contact AFA EAP anytime. 800-424-2406.

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