

ASSIST DRUG INFORMATION CARD

KETAMINE



Street names

K, Special K, Super K, Vitamin K, Kitkat, Ket, Horse tranquilizer.

What is it?

Ketamine (Ketamine hydrochloride) is a dissociative general anaesthetic that is used by medical practitioners and vets for pain relief and amnesia. It works by stopping the brain from interpreting messages of pain. The drug is also used illicitly becoming popular in the early 2000's especially amongst people in the club/ dance scene.

What does it look like?

Ketamine is manufactured as a clear liquid however when used illicitly the liquid is evaporated to form a white crystalline powder sold in 'bumps' (a small amount of powder) or grams. A bump is snorted through a small glass nasal inhaler called a 'bumper'.

How is it usually taken?

Ketamine is usually snorted but it can also be dissolved in liquid and swallowed. Sometimes people smoke it with tobacco or cannabis. It can also be shafted (inserted anally) or injected intramuscularly.

Immediate effects

The onset of effects differs depending on the route of administration. If ketamine is snorted it takes between 5–10 minutes to come on or up to 20 minutes if the drug is swallowed. If the drug is smoked or injected the effects will be felt within 30 seconds. Ketamine produces a feeling of dissociation and detachment from self and reality which can last for 45-60 minutes. It can also produce hallucinations.

The short-term effects of ketamine include:

- A sense of euphoria and wellbeing
- Increased libido
- Drowsiness
- Slurred speech

- Dissociation
- Hallucinations
- A sense of floating
- Amnesia
- Nausea and vomiting.

In higher doses, people can experience an 'emergent state' which is often referred to as a 'K-hole'. This is a trip-like experience characterised by hallucinations, disorientation, sense of invincibility, inability to communicate with others, and a limited awareness of the surrounding environment.

Ketamine does not suppress breathing or heart rate, so deaths from overdose are rare.

Long-term effects

Large and repeated doses of ketamine can result in urinary tract damage often referred to as 'ketamine bladder syndrome' or 'ketamine cystitis'. This is a painful condition which includes ulceration in the bladder, bladder shrinkage and incontinence. Frequent use of the drug is also associated with poor memory and concentration. Some regular ketamine users also experience 'flashbacks' (re-experiencing the effects of a drug after the effects have worn off).

Mixing ketamine with other drugs

Mixing ketamine with other drugs including over-the-counter and prescription drugs can be dangerous and lead to unpredictable reactions – this is particularly so for depressants like alcohol, benzodiazepines and opioids. Mixing ketamine with stimulant drugs such as methamphetamines, cocaine and MDMA can also have negative effects by increasing blood pressure and heart rate.

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Harm reduction advice

- Go slow, stay low – especially if using it for the first time
- Its difficult to keep sense of time while using ketamine, so if you are planning on re-dosing set a timer on your phone and leave at least 30 minutes between doses
- Avoid using ketamine too frequently as the drug can have negative and permanent effects on the body – especially the bladder
- Try to leave about 4 months between doses
- Make sure the ketamine is finely crushed if snorting
- Don't share straws, bumpers or other snorting equipment they can transmit blood borne viruses
- Try to use in a calm and safe environment with people you know and trust
- Using alcohol and ketamine together can increase the chance of experiencing a 'K-hole'