

The ketamine sold at clubs may be mixed with other drugs, which in combination could make it even more dangerous. Combining ketamine with alcohol or other sedatives can be fatal.

Driving or operating machinery while under the influence of ketamine, or any drug, increases the risk of physical injury to the user, and increases the risk of injury to others.

Is ketamine addictive?

If ketamine is used regularly, the user becomes more tolerant to the effects of the drug; meaning more and more is needed to achieve the same effect. There have been no reports of typical symptoms of drug withdrawal when users stop taking ketamine.

What are the long-term effects of using ketamine?

Since there has been little research about the long-term non-medical use of ketamine, the long-term effects are not known.

One in a series...

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Do You Know...

Street Name: special K, K, ket, vitamin K, cat tranquilizers

What is it?

Ketamine is a fast-acting anaesthetic and painkiller used primarily in veterinary surgery. It is also used to a lesser extent in human medicine.

Ketamine can produce vivid dreams or hallucinations, and make the user feel as though the mind is separated from the body. This effect is called "dissociation," which is also the effect of the related drug PCP. When ketamine is given to humans for medical reasons, it is often given in combination with another drug that prevents hallucinations.



What does ketamine look like?

The ketamine that is manufactured for medical use is sold in a liquid form, though it is usually converted into a white powder before it is sold illicitly. The powder is snorted, mixed into drinks or smoked with marijuana or tobacco. The liquid is added to drinks, or injected, usually into a muscle, because injecting it into a vein usually causes loss of consciousness.

Who uses ketamine?

Ketamine is legally available only to veterinarians and medical doctors. It is then stolen or diverted, and sold illegally on the street or in clubs for recreational use.

Ketamine has been used for its psychedelic effects for nearly 30 years. Users include those who take the drug for the feeling that it allows them to enter another reality. A recent increase in the popularity of the drug among young people may be related to its availability as a “club drug” at parties and “raves.”

Ketamine dissolves in liquid, allowing it to be slipped into drinks, and its sedative effects have been used to prevent victims from resisting sexual assault. For this reason it has been commonly referred to in the media as a “date rape” drug. Take caution at parties and bars — watch your drink.

How does ketamine make you feel?

The way ketamine — or any other drug — affects you depends on many factors, including:

- your age and your body weight
- how much you take and how often you take it
- how long you’ve been taking it
- the method you use to take the drug
- the environment you’re in
- whether or not you have certain pre-existing medical or psychiatric conditions
- if you’ve taken any alcohol or other drugs (illicit, prescription, over-the counter or herbal).

The effects of ketamine are usually felt between one and ten minutes after taking the drug. Users report a drunken and dizzy feeling and a quick numbness in the body. The range of visual experiences are reported to include blurred vision, seeing “trails,” “astral travel” and intense and terrifying hallucinations. Some report feelings of weightlessness, and “out-of-body” or “near-death” experiences.

When ketamine is taken in lower doses, users may feel sleepy, distracted and withdrawn. They may find it more difficult to think clearly, feel confused and have a distorted perception of time and body. At higher doses they may babble, not remember who or where they are, stumble if they try to walk, feel their hearts race and find it difficult to breathe. Too high a dose of ketamine causes loss of consciousness.

How long does the feeling last?

The effects of ketamine usually last about an hour. Some users may feel low or anxious, have some memory loss and experience flashbacks of their drug experience long after the effects of the drug have worn off.

Is ketamine dangerous?

Yes. If it is not used under the care of health professionals in a medical setting, users of ketamine put themselves at risk a number of ways.

Like all anaesthetics, ketamine prevents the user from feeling pain. This means that if injury occurs, the user may not know it. Depending on the amount of drug taken, those under its effects may have difficulty standing up or speaking, resulting in an increased risk of injury.

As with other anaesthetics, ketamine may cause vomiting. Eating or drinking before taking the drug increases the risk of choking on vomit.

When taken in higher doses, ketamine may depress the central nervous system. This can reduce the level of oxygen that gets to the brain, heart and other muscles, and may even cause death.