



Ketamine

Special k, vitamin k, K, kit kat, jet, ket

Ketamine (K) is a medication used mainly as an anaesthetic by the medical profession (eg. ketalar) and veterinarians (eg. katapex) though it also has other uses including as a sedative and pain killer.

Ketamine produces a trance-like state and in small doses has a dissociative (detached from self) and hallucinogenic (trippy) effect which led to it becoming popular as a recreational drug in the 1970s and as a party drug in recent years though it has also been implicated as a date-rape drug.

Ketamine can come as a white crystalline powder, a clear liquid, or tablet. It can be taken orally, snorted or injected though this is not recommended as you can be unconscious before you remove the needle from your vein. It is sometimes mixed with stimulants and sold as ecstasy. However, ketamine has no E content and is not a loved-up buzz. It's more like PCP (or Angel Dust). Most users say that K is a really 'out there' experience, even more so than acid and while some find it a mind-expanding even spiritual experience others dislike the feeling of having no control.

In New Zealand Ketamine is scheduled as a Class C drug with penalties for possession, importing, manufacturing and/or supplying including jail and/or fines.

What Ketamine does

It's important to remember that ketamine is a very different drug to E and effects depend on how much you take and how you take it. In high doses, feelings of sedation and numbness are more pronounced than its hallucinogenic effects. It is very short-acting: it takes effect within about 10 - 15 minutes and wears off after 1 - 2 hours, with reality suddenly returning.

Commonly experienced effects include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> feeling very 'out there', a feeling of having confusion and having no or little control euphoria and relaxation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a feeling of being very detached – some users have reported 'out of body' experiences or feeling removed from their body
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hallucinations and altered sensory perception, especially visual, auditory, bodily, time and space perception distorted body image (changes in size and form) and 'tunnel vision' may be experienced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> blurred vision and constricted pupils nausea and vomiting insensitivity to pain and numbness sweating slurred speech
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> anxiety, agitation, paranoia and panic elevated blood pressure and muscle tremors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Music can seem loud and dancing is difficult due to lack of coordination

High doses can cause more intense and unpleasant or dangerous effects including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> abnormal heart rhythms (palpitations), fast or slow heart rate, high or low blood pressure, chest pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> nausea or vomiting, convulsions severe numbness, dizziness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> confusion, feelings of anxiety, panic and terror, paranoia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> twitching, lack of coordination 'near death' experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> blurred/double vision, tics/ involuntary eye movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> incontinence, less bladder control
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> drowsiness leading to heavy sedation or loss of consciousness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased risk of accidents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> unpredictable, hostile and bizarre behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased body temperature or fever
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extreme dissociation with visual and auditory hallucinations, known as the 'K-hole' 	

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Long-term effects

Little is known about the long-term effects of ketamine, although there are some reports of mental impairment including LSD-type flashbacks, short-term memory loss and urinary tract problems including incontinence and weakened bladder control.

Regular and long-term use has been linked to changes in personality and moods, including depression and trouble concentrating.

Tolerance and dependence

People who use ketamine regularly can become psychologically dependent meaning they will crave ketamine, feeling they need it to function effectively and feel comfortable in certain situations, for example when attending a dance party. Tolerance can develop quickly meaning more ketamine is needed to get the desired effect and users will often find themselves rapidly increasing their dose over time.

Harm Reduction:

- No use is the safest option especially **if you are responsible for the care of others, particularly children.**
- Low doses work best and are safer. Few people have died using K, but it's strongly advisable to check the potency with someone who has tried the same gear. As with speed, how strong or cut down it is could vary considerably.
- Avoid mixing drugs as the combined effects become more unpredictable and often increase health risks. Especially avoid using other depressant drugs (e.g. benzos, opiates, alcohol) as the combined sedative effect increases the risk of overdose, choking, or losing consciousness.
- Combining ketamine with speed or other stimulants puts extra strain on your system, heart, etc. and increases the risk of psychotic reactions similar to PCP.
- If you have previously freaked out on acid (LSD) or other hallucinogens it would be safest to avoid K.
- Watch out for each other as it's easy to injure yourself if you're numb, uncoordinated and 'off the planet'. The chill room (if you can find one) can be a good place to blob out for a while. Or stay home.
- Avoid K if you have heart or breathing problems, have experienced mental distress or are feeling fragile. IV use is very dangerous and likely to produce unconsciousness. It's safest to avoid injecting K completely but if you're going to inject, do it intramuscularly, not intravenously.
- Don't share straws or other snorting devices as these may have traces of blood on them and put you at risk of contracting a blood borne virus like HIV or hepatitis.
- Avoid eating to reduce the chance of choking and vomiting when out of it.
- It's not advisable to use alone. Tell friends if you're taking K and keep an eye on friends who are.
- Do not attempt to drive a vehicle or operate machinery.
- There is not a lot of information about ketamine in pregnancy. It is not known to cause any long term problems in unborn babies, but using while pregnant could put you and the baby at risk of accidents e.g. if you fall. Using ketamine while breast feeding is not recommended as it is not known how much will get through to breastmilk – if you do use don't feed the baby for around 12 hours after and discard any milk expressed during this time.

Looking for help?

If you're looking for more information, or maybe want to talk to someone for yourself or someone close to you give [Auckland CADS](#) a call on **845-1818**

For confidential advice, support or information about alcohol & drug services in your region contact Alcohol & Drug Helpline on 0800-787-797 10am to 10pm daily

Use your first aid skills and CALL for an ambulance (111) if you are concerned about a person's health

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