



Ketamine Factsheet

For parents and carers



Working for **Cumberland Council** and
Westmorland & Furness Council

What is Ketamine?

Ketamine is used in medicine as an anaesthetic for humans and animals. It can be a dangerous drug when misused, especially for children and young people. Ketamine is most commonly on offer within clubs, music festivals, parties, and raves, where users feel it can intensify the sounds of music and their experiences of lights and atmosphere. Ketamine is most popular amongst young people aged 16 - 24 years.



Source: *What is Ketamine? - Rehab Guide Clinics*

Why is Ketamine attractive to young people?

1. **It is a Hallucinogen** - young people may think hallucinating is a fun experience.
2. **It is addictive** - once they feel the pleasant feelings they may want more. Ketamine tolerance builds up quickly so a young person will have to take more and more to get close to the same result each time.
3. **It is sold in clubs and raves** - popular places for young people to hang around.
4. **It can cause feelings of euphoria** - Ketamine increases dopamine neurotransmission.
5. **Amplifies sensory reactions** - touch can feel pleasurable, sounds can feel more intense, and smells are more extreme.
6. **Loss of sense of identity** - those who may be depressed or dissatisfied find the feeling of losing their sense of identity comforting.
7. **Floating sensation** - floating or flying sensation is part of a Ketamine high which many find a pleasant feeling.

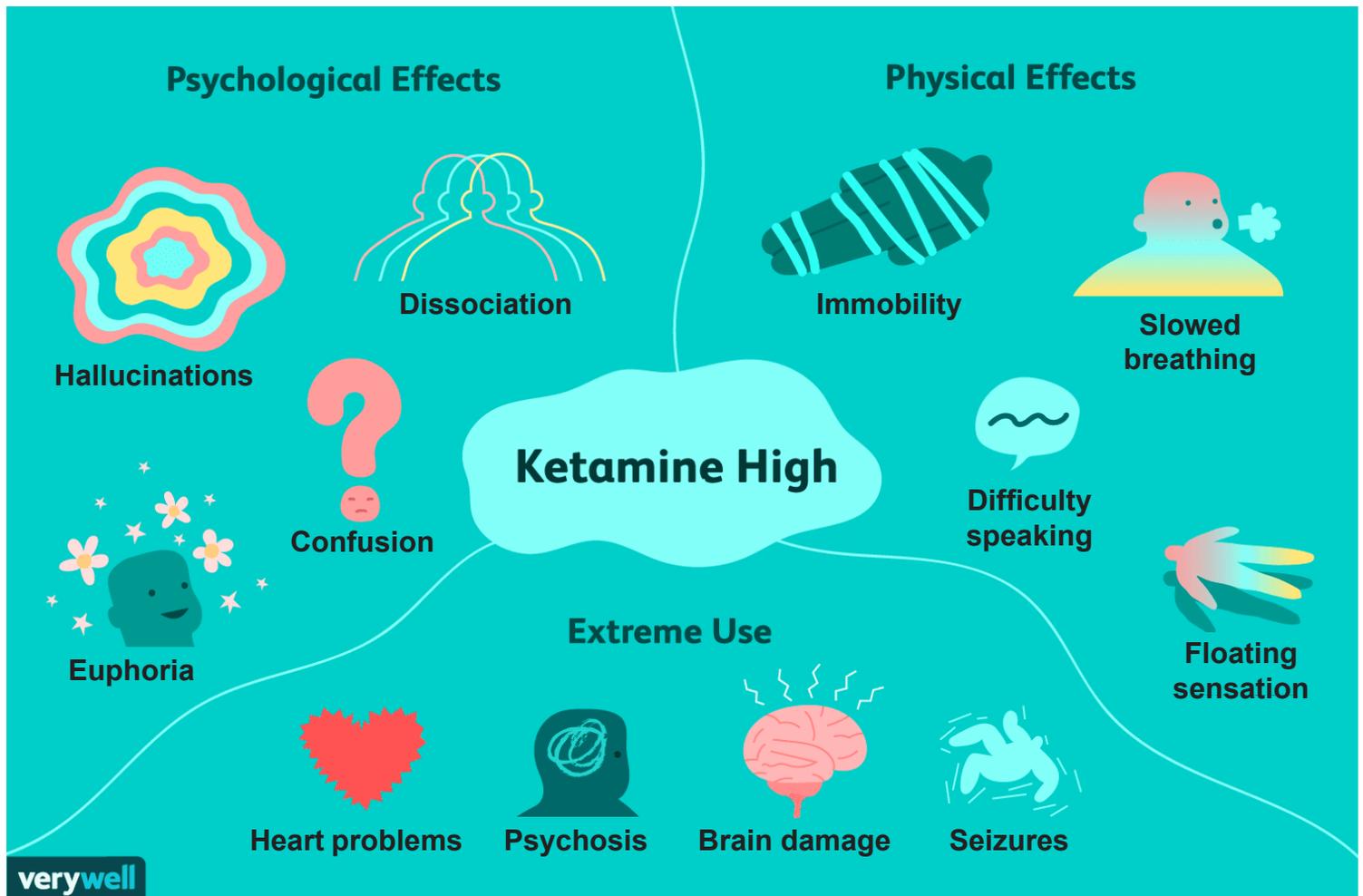


Source: *Ketamine: Factsheet – Positive Choices*

¹ [All about Ketamine you can learn \(Information\) – caffelattela](#)

² [Ketamine - Alcohol and Drug Foundation \(adf.org.au\)](#)

What are the health risks?



Short term effects could effects could include the user ²

- feeling happy and relaxed.
- feeling detached from your body ('falling into a k-hole').
- experiencing visual and auditory hallucinations.
- experiencing confusion and clumsiness.
- experiencing increased heart rate and blood pressure.
- demonstrating slurred speech and blurred vision.
- experiencing anxiety, panic, and violence.
- vomiting.
- experiencing lowered sensitivity to pain.

Long-term effects could include the user:³

- experiencing flashbacks.
- having a poor sense of smell (from snorting).
- experiencing mood and personality changes and/or becoming depressed.
- having poor memory, struggling with thinking and concentration.
- having an abnormal liver or kidney function.
- experiencing abdominal pain.
- needing to use more to get the same effect.
- dependence on Ketamine.
- financial, work and social problems.
- Ketamine bladder syndrome.

Mental health risks include:⁴

- With longer term use, the mental health effects of Ketamine use can include flashbacks, memory loss and problems with concentration.
- Regular use can cause depression and, occasionally, psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations. Ketamine can also make existing mental health problems worse.

³ [Ketamine - Alcohol and Drug Foundation \(adf.org.au\)](https://www.adf.org.au/ketamine)

⁴ [FRANK Ketamine | Effects of Ketamine | FRANK \(talktofrank.com\)](https://www.talktofrank.com/frank/ketamine/effects-of-ketamine/)

What might you notice if your young person is using Ketamine?

The following are common signs a person is using Ketamine:⁵

- A change in behaviour.
- A lack of interest in usual activities.
- Getting into trouble at school or work.
- Experiencing difficulties in personal relationships; this could be due to mood swings, the user's focus on finding money to fund their drug use or not wanting to socialise.
- Violent and erratic behaviours.
- Visiting multiple doctors' offices in search of Ketamine.
- Stealing (to fund the habit).
- Experiencing problems with their kidneys and/or bladder.

Top tips for talking

Find out the facts about Ketamine... before you start the conversation.

Think about how you will react... if your young person says they have or are using Ketamine.

Don't make assumptions about... what your young person knows or what they do.

If they say that they have used Ketamine... stay calm; we want to encourage open and non-judgemental conversations.

Pick a good time to talk... think about when and where works best. This can mean taking the opportunity when you notice stories in the news or Ketamine related storylines on TV can be good ways to start conversation. Using these to open a conversation may mean that your young person doesn't feel like you are accusing them of something, and they may be more likely to open and talk with you.

Listen to them... listen to what they have to say and don't lose your temper if you don't agree with what they say – it may make them rebel more and be less open to talking further. Explain your concerns and tell them why you don't want them to use Ketamine. You can link this to the short, long-term, and mental health risks in this leaflet or you could search for "health risks of using Ketamine" on a recognised site such as www.TalktoFrank.com

⁵ [Ketamine - DrugFacts](#)

Let them know that you are there for them and care about them... is important that young people know that they can come to you with questions and have a conversation with you about Ketamine and other substances – that way they are getting clear and reliable information to help their decision-making.

Talk about different reasons why young people may use Ketamine... give examples such as wanting to fit in, curiosity or stress. Talk through effective ways to respond if they ever feel pressured to try it.

If your young person is using Ketamine ... try to understand why they are using by asking questions like, “what do you enjoy about using Ketamine” or “How does Ketamine make you feel?” understanding this might help you to understand their needs and discuss other ways to meet those needs.

Set boundaries... make it clear what your house rules are so they know what you will and won't accept.

Call on your friends, family or wider network.... if you or your young person don't want to talk, why not ask someone else they have a relationship with or they respect to have a chat with them.

Go back to it... these conversations can feel really challenging but they are important, don't give up if it feels like it is all going wrong. Take a break and go back to it another time.

Advice for parents⁶

Parents and carers have a significant role to play in helping their children make decisions about drug use, including Ketamine. Here are some tips:

Discuss coping mechanisms. Because Ketamine has a reputation as a drug that helps people escape from reality, it may be used by people who are struggling in one way or another. Knowing where to look for **healthier strategies** can help reduce the chance of this.

Raise the issue of spiking. Ketamine can make people vulnerable and so it may be used for **spiking**. Talking about this can help your young person spot the signs and reduce the chance of it happening to them.

Understand the law. Because Ketamine is used as a human and veterinary medicine, some people may feel that this can legitimise its recreational use, but in the UK, it is a **Class B drug** (alongside cannabis and codeine) so a possession charge risks a five year prison sentence and an unlimited fine, with even harsher penalties for supply.

Highlight how someone's surroundings can add more risk. Alongside drug and person, place is the **third dimension of risk** when it comes to drug taking and involves a lot of variables. This is particularly relevant with Ketamine because of reduced pain perception as well as impaired balance and coordination.

Check first aid skills. Knowing the **recovery position**, the signs of a **medical emergency** and what to do in an **emergency situation** are vital life lessons.

Key facts to take away

Having some key facts at your fingertips can help you have a conversation with your young person.

- Ketamine is a general anaesthetic that can produce ‘floaty’ feelings, as if the mind and body have been separated.⁷
- People who use Ketamine more than a couple of times are at high risk of damaging their kidneys and especially their bladder, this is known as **K-bladder**.⁸
- Ketamine can cause loss of coordination, numbness in limbs, drowsiness, confusion, and hallucinations.
- Snorting is the most common way of using Ketamine. Regular use this way can result in nasal ulcers or damage to the septum.
- If you ever hear of the term “**Calvin-Klein**” or “**CK**” – it refers to a mixture of Cocaine and Ketamine, this is extremely popular at festivals. It produces a similar effect to MDMA. The mixture of the stimulant properties of Cocaine and anaesthetic properties of Ketamine can be lethal. Find more information about the dangers of mixing Ketamine with other drugs at www.talktofrank.com/drug/ketamine#mixing

Harm reduction advice to give young people:

- ‘Start low and go slow’: Try a small amount first as the substance may be stronger than your tolerance levels. You can’t tell the purity by appearance. If you can test it, then it is always encouraged to do so. (Some festivals offer free drug testing without risk of arrest as part of a harm reduction approach).
- Make sure the Ketamine is properly crushed to ensure minimal damage to your nose. Try not to share straws when snorting, this can lead to transmission of viruses like Hepatitis C. Always rinse your nose out with clean water after using to remove any residue and prevent any further damage.
- Avoid using alone. Consider having a person to ‘trip sit’ who remains sober and can help if needed.
- Avoid using Ketamine as a way of managing your mental health such as anxiety or

⁶ [Dsm foundation: A quick guide to Ketamine. 20231706-TUE265-A-quick-guide-to-ketamine-DSM-version.pdf \(dsmfoundation.org.uk\)](https://www.dsmfoundation.org.uk/20231706-TUE265-A-quick-guide-to-ketamine-DSM-version.pdf)

⁷ [Ketamine - DrugFacts](#)

⁸ [Ketamine - Everything You Need to Know - Drug Science\)](#)

depression. Recreational use can actually make these issues worse in the long run.

- Stay hydrated prior to taking Ketamine, during, and after to reduce harm to your bladder.
- Avoid mixing with other drugs, especially with other sedating drugs such as alcohol and benzos. Even at low doses your risk levels are increased.
- **“Calvin-Klein” CK** - Calvin-Klein refers to a mixture of Cocaine and Ketamine, this is extremely popular at festivals. It produces a similar effect to MDMA. The mixture of the stimulant properties of Cocaine and anaesthetic properties of Ketamine can be lethal.
- To avoid injury when taking large doses of Ketamine, it is advised that the user is in a place without trip hazards. If any severe pain is felt once the drug has worn off, then you should seek medical attention.
- If you notice any cramps in your abdomen (K-cramps), needing to pee more and notice blood in your pee, these are all signs of Ketamine damage to your internal organs and so stopping using Ketamine is recommended.
- Consider the impact of your mood and environment. Risks can increase/decrease depending on how you're feeling prior to taking a drug and where you take it. Try to use in a safe space. Accidentally going into a k-hole in an unsafe or unfamiliar place can be a scary and dangerous experience, leaving you more vulnerable to robbery and sexual assault.

Signposting & Resources

FRANK



DSM foundation

The drug education charity

Shop
Parent Resources

withyou

Translation Services

If you require this document in another format (e.g. CD, audio cassette, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone: **0300 303 2992**.

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে 0300 303 2992 নম্বরে টেলিফোন করুন।

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