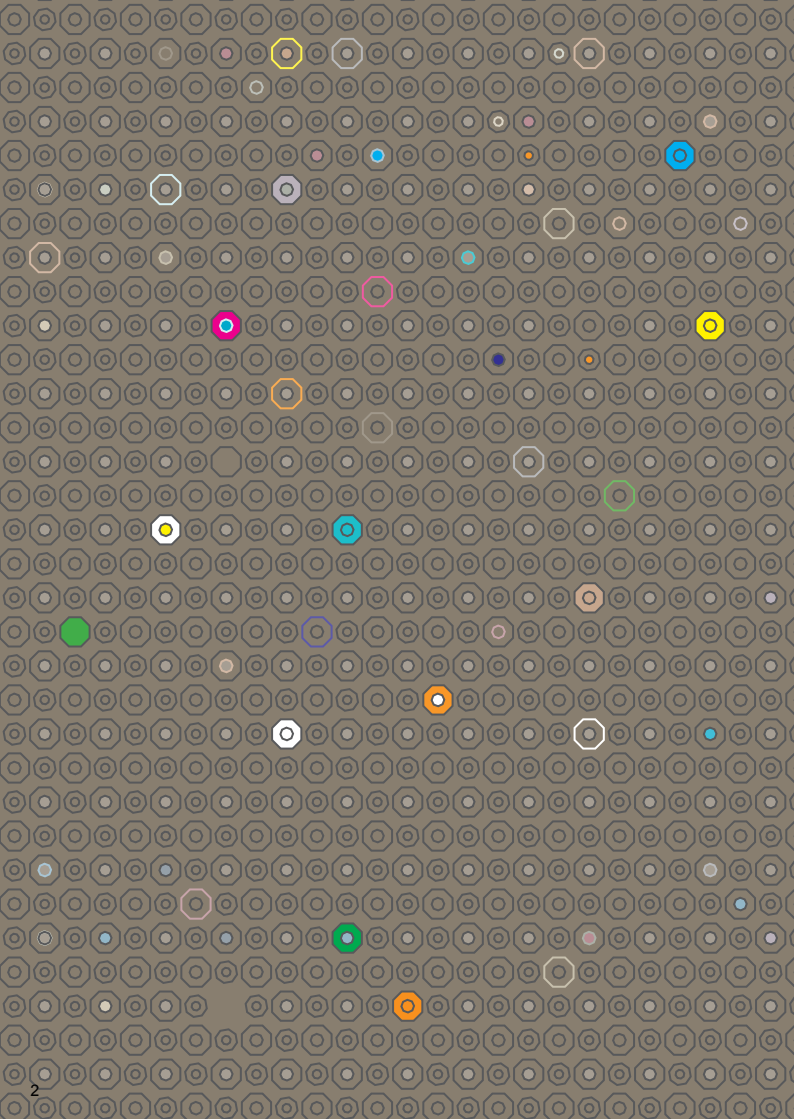




Ketamine

AWARE



WHAT IS KETAMINE?

Ketamine is an anaesthetic licensed for use in human and animal medicine.

The non-medical use of ketamine became popular in the UK in the early 1990s rave scene, often sold in tablet form as ecstasy.

The illicit form of ketamine normally comes as white crystals or powder.

HOW IS KETAMINE USED?

Snorted

A common method in a club environment would be to dip the end of a key into the bag of powder and sniff a small amount from the tip, known as 'keying'. Alternatively it is chopped up into lines and snorted.

Swallowed

Although less common, as it takes too long to work and acts as a laxative, ketamine is sometimes wrapped in paper or tissue and swallowed, known as 'bombing' or 'parachuting'.

Smoked

This is a rare way to use ketamine as it tastes awful and wears off quickly.

Injecting

Usually injected into a muscle. Injecting ketamine increases the risk of overdose and the infection problems related to injecting.

PROBLEMS

The ketamine experience can vary depending on your environment, but generally, in small doses ketamine acts as a stimulant, boosting your energy levels, and making you feel high and trippy. At larger doses it can provide a mystical out-of-body-experience where you can experience hallucinations (sometimes shared), a sense of calm and serenity, distortions of time, panic, unpleasant feelings and nightmare-like experiences.

The out-of-body experience is known as being in a 'K hole'.

These feelings can last up to 90 minutes.

Physical effects can include loss of control over the body, loss of coordination, difficulty speaking, moving, hearing and seeing (delirium), numbness, and nausea.

When snorted, the effects begin within a few minutes and last around 30-45 minutes, depending on how much is taken.

If swallowed, the effects begin around 15-30 minutes and last for 1-3 hours.

PERSONAL SAFETY

The main problem associated with ketamine is physical helplessness experienced at high doses. Disconnection from the body can be dangerous, especially in the disorienting environment of a club or rave. This can leave the user vulnerable to accidents and assault (both physical and sexual) and having unprotected sex, increasing the risk of unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Bladder problems

Prolonged and regular ketamine use can damage your bladder and kidneys, sometimes permanently. If you experience an increased need to urinate, passing blood, leakage of urine and pain on urination, consult your GP and let them know you use ketamine.

K-Cramps

A commonly reported symptom of ketamine use is K-pains or K-cramps. The cause of these abdominal pains are, as yet, unclear, but seem to be linked to high dose use of more than a gram a day.

MENTAL HEALTH

Occasional use of ketamine (once or twice a month) is not thought to cause any long-term or irreversible damage. Persistent use, however, has been linked with a wide range of distressing psychological effects, including anxiety, panic attacks, flashbacks, persistent perceptual changes, mania, depression, insomnia, nightmares, an unpleasant feeling of being unreal or that the world is unreal, paranoia and delusions.

DEPENDENCY

Although not considered physically addictive, tolerance to ketamine builds up very quickly and higher doses are needed to achieve the desired effects.

This can lead to problems with memory, word/name recall, reduced attention span, damage to relationships, loss of productivity, isolation, and neglecting other interests.

MIXING DRUGS

Nowadays, very few people use one drug on its own, and ketamine is no exception. Ketamine is often used, on a night out, in combination with a range of substances including alcohol (avoid!), cocaine (CK1), and the plethora of new and emerging compounds ("legal highs") that are becoming more readily available. Obviously, mixing drugs increases the risks and should be avoided as the outcome is difficult to predict.

REDUCE THE RISKS

The best way to avoid the risk associated with drugs is not to use drugs.

But if you are considering using ketamine, the following advice will help minimise the risks to your health.

- Don't take ketamine on your own. Only do it somewhere you feel safe and where you can keep an eye on each other.
- Chopping the crystals/powder as fine as possible before snorting will help reduce the damage to your nose.
- Start low and slow, take a small amount and wait. Don't take more because you can't feel anything when you expect it to. It could be a different substance or a different strength than last time. Be patient, give it time to work. Don't overload yourself with different substances, learn to recognise and handle the effects.
- Don't mix ketamine with other drugs, especially depressant like alcohol, GHB/GBL, these will slow your breathing down to dangerous levels. This can lead to dependence on several drugs, and increase your risk of overdose.
- Don't spark up or slip into a nice relaxing warm bath just before you are about to lose the use of your limbs. It can only end in tears

IN CONTROL

If you are using ketamine follow these tips to stay in control.

- Only buy what you are going to use during a session. Don't buy 'some for later', 'later' will only become 'now'.
- Using any drugs can put a strain on your body and affect your physical and mental health, so try to eat a healthy diet and get enough sleep, it will make you feel better.
- If you start to feel agitated, confused or anxious, stop using, go and chill out somewhere quiet and take a friend to keep an eye on you.
- Repeated ketamine use reduces the effects you feel when you first use it. You may use more to 'chase the high', leading to a damaging habit. Don't use every day and space out the sessions.
- All drug users need to know how to react if someone overdoses. Because of the 'sledging' effects of ketamine, this may prove very important to know how to react.

It can be difficult to be sure, with someone who has used ketamine, if they are in difficulty. But if someone's breathing is slow and shallow and they do not respond when you try to talk to them, it is probably better to be cautious and put them in the recovery position, which is lying them on their side, so they don't choke if they vomit, before you get help and call an ambulance. Tell the medical staff everything they have taken. It may save a life.

KETAMINE AND THE LAW

In the UK Ketamine is a Class C Drug and is therefore illegal to possess or supply to others.

Maximum of two years imprisonment for possession and 14 years for possession with intent to supply. Both carry the potential for an unlimited fine.

GETTING HELP

If you feel your ketamine use is getting out of hand, the organisations below may be able to help.

TALK TO FRANK

National drugs awareness site for young people and parents/carers.

0800 77 66 00. www.talktofrank.com

ADDACTION

UK - wide treatment agency, helping individuals, families and communities to manage the effects of drug and alcohol misuse.

www.addaction.org.uk

RELEASE

Release is the national centre of expertise on drugs and drugs law – providing free and confidential specialist advice to the public and professionals.

Helpline 0845 4500 215. www.release.org.uk

THESITE.ORG

Factsheets & articles on all the key issues facing young people including: sex and relationships; drinking and drugs; health and wellbeing.

www.thesite.org.uk