



Ketamine

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

Ketamine (K) is mainly used as an anaesthetic by the medical profession (eg. ketalar) and veterinarians (eg. katapex) though it is also used 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 made it popular as a recreational drug in the 1970s and as a party drug more recently 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. Injecting K 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, taking effect within about 10 - 15 minutes and wearing off after 1 - 2 hours.

Commonly experienced effects include:

- feeling very 'out there', having no or little control while also feeling very detached – people describe it as feeling removed from their body
- hallucinations and altered sensory perception, especially visual, auditory, bodily, time and space perception
- short term memory loss. While using K people often have trouble , accessing old memories or creating new memories: they forget words, names, and conversations
- lack of coordination
- insensitive to pain and numbness
- sweating and slurred speech
- euphoria and relaxation
- anxiety, agitation, paranoia and panic
- distorted body image (changes in size and form) and 'tunnel vision' may be experienced
- blurred vision and constricted pupils
- elevated blood pressure and muscle tremors
- nausea and vomiting

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

- abnormal heart rhythms (palpitations), fast or slow heart rate, high or low blood pressure, chest pain
- drowsiness leading to heavy sedation or loss of consciousness
- confusion, feelings of anxiety, panic and terror, paranoia
- increased risk of accidents and physical harm from loss of motor skills, perception changes, numbness, impaired vision and co-ordination
- twitching, lack of coordination
- 'near death' experience
- blurred/double vision, tics/ involuntary eye movement
- unpredictable, hostile and bizarre behaviour
- Extreme mind/body dissociation with visual and auditory hallucinations and confusion, known as the 'K-hole'
- nausea or vomiting, convulsions
- severe numbness, dizziness
- incontinence, less bladder control
- increased body temperature or fever

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Long-term effects

Using ketamine can lead to LSD-type flashbacks, short-term memory loss and urinary tract problems including the need to pee urgently and more often, as well as pressure and pain behind the pelvic bone.

People who have used K regularly and long-term report problems with memory, mood swings, and ongoing trouble with concentration and thinking clearly while physically they report seizures, high blood pressure and respiratory issues.

Tolerance and dependence

Tolerance can develop quickly because, with frequent use, the body learns to function with the drug's presence, leading to physical dependency where the person needs to take the drug in order to feel stable and ward off withdrawal symptoms. It is also possible to become psychologically dependent meaning people feel they need it to function effectively and feel comfortable in certain situations, for example when socialising with others.

Harm reduction tips

- No use is the safest option especially if you are responsible for the care of others particularly infants/children
- Know your stuff. Check the potency with someone who has tried the same gear. As with speed, how strong or cut down it is could vary considerably. Get it checked if you can. <https://knowyourstuff.nz/>
- Go low and slow. Low doses are safer. If you have previously freaked out on acid (LSD) or other hallucinogens it would be safest to avoid K
- Combining K with other drugs is risky and the effects unpredictable:
 - Combining with other depressant drugs (e.g. benzos, opiates, alcohol) increases the sedative effect so also increases the risk of overdose, choking, or losing consciousness
 - Combining with speed or other stimulants puts extra strain on your body and increases the risk of psychotic reactions similar to PCP
- Avoid K if you have heart or breathing problems, have experienced mental distress or are feeling fragile
- Injecting K 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 (B and C)
- It's easy to hurt yourself on K: people have experienced significant harm after jumping from heights, driving vehicles and causing traffic accidents; they've becoming victims of crime, have drowned and suffered hypothermia. So watch out for each other and don't use K alone - tell friends if you're taking it
- Chill out in the chill room (if you can find one). Or stay home
- Avoid eating to reduce the chance of choking and vomiting when out of it
- Do not attempt to drive a vehicle or operate machinery!
- There is not a lot of information about ketamine in pregnancy but using while pregnant could put you and the baby at short – and long-term risk
- 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 contact [Auckland CADS](#) on **09 845-1818**

For confidential advice, support or information about alcohol and drug services 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 wellbeing.