



Ketamine

WHAT IS KETAMINE?

Ketamine is a dissociative anesthetic that has some hallucinogenic effects. Ketamine distorts the perception of sight and sound and makes the user feel disconnected and not in control. It is referred to as a “dissociative anesthetic hallucinogen” because it makes patients feel detached from their pain and environment.

Ketamine can induce a state of sedation (feeling calm and relaxed), immobility, relief from pain, and amnesia (no memory of events while under the influence of the drug) and is used for the dissociative sensations and hallucinogenic effects. Ketamine has also been used to facilitate sexual assault.

Ketamine is an approved medical product as an injectable, short-acting anesthetic for use in humans and animals and as esketamine (Spravato®; the active form of the drug) as a nasal spray for treatment resistant depression.

WHAT IS ITS ORIGIN?

Ketamine is produced commercially in a number of countries, including the United States. Most of the ketamine illegally distributed in the United States is diverted or stolen from legitimate sources, particularly veterinary clinics, or smuggled into the United States from Mexico.

Distribution of ketamine typically occurs among friends and acquaintances, most often at nightclubs, parties, music festivals, and concerts; street sales of ketamine are rare.

How is it used?

Ketamine, along with the other “club drugs,” has become popular among teens and young adults at dance clubs, musical festivals, and concerts. Ketamine is manufactured commercially as a powder or liquid.



Vials containing liquid ketamine

What are common street names?

Common street names include:

- Cat Tranquilizer, Cat Valium, Jet K, Kit Kat, Purple, Special K, Special La Coke, Super Acid, Super K, and Vitamin K

What does it look like?

Ketamine comes in a clear liquid and a white or off-white powder. Powdered ketamine (100 mg to 200 mg) typically is packaged in small glass vials, small plastic bags, and capsules as well as paper, glassine, or aluminum foil folds.

Powdered ketamine is cut into lines known as bumps and snorted, or it is smoked, typically in marijuana or tobacco cigarettes. Liquid ketamine is injected or mixed into drinks. Ketamine is found by itself or often in combination with MDMA, amphetamine, methamphetamine, or cocaine.

What is its effect on the mind?

Ketamine produces hallucinations. It distorts perceptions of sight and sound and makes the user feel disconnected and not in control. A “Special K” trip is touted as better than that of LSD or PCP because its hallucinatory effects are relatively short in duration, lasting approximately 30 to 60 minutes as opposed to several hours.

Slang for experiences related to ketamine or effects of ketamine include:

- “K-land” (refers to a mellow and colorful experience)
- “K-hole” (refers to the out-of-body, near death experience)
- “Baby food” (users sink in to blissful, infantile inertia)
- “God” (users are convinced that they have met their maker)

The onset of effects is rapid and often occurs within a few minutes of taking the drug, though taking it orally results in a slightly slower onset of effects. Ketamine may cause unwanted side effects such as: agitation, depression, cognitive difficulties, unconsciousness, and amnesia.

Hallucinogen Persisting Perception Disorder has been reported several weeks after ketamine use and may include experiencing prolonged visual disturbances.

What is its effect on the body?

A couple of minutes after taking the drug, the user may experience an increase in heart rate and blood pressure that gradually decreases over the next 10 to 20 minutes. Ketamine can make users unresponsive to stimuli.

When in this state, users experience:

- Involuntarily rapid eye movement, dilated pupils, salivation, tear secretions, stiffening of the muscles, and possible nausea



Ketamine in various forms

What are its overdose effects?

An overdose can cause unconsciousness and dangerously slowed breathing.

Which drugs cause similar effects?

Other hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD, PCP, and mescaline can cause hallucinations. There are also several drugs such as GHB, Rohypnol®, and other depressants that are used for their amnesiac or sedative properties to facilitate sexual assault.

What is its legal status in the United States?

Since the 1970s, ketamine has been marketed in the United States as an injectable, short-acting anesthetic for use in humans and animals. In 1999, ketamine, including its salts, isomers, and salts of isomers, became a Schedule III non-narcotic substance under the Controlled Substances Act. It currently has accepted medical uses for short-term sedation and anesthesia. In addition, in 2019, FDA approved the S(+) enantiomer of ketamine (esketamine) nasal spray version (Spravato®) for treatment-resistant depression that is only available at a certified doctor’s office or clinic. Ketamine has the potential for misuse, which may lead to moderate or low physical dependence or high psychological dependence.