

What Is Ketamine?

Ketamine, or ketamine hydrochloride, is a non-barbiturate, rapid-acting dissociative anesthetic used on both animals and humans; it also has been used in human medicine for pediatric burn cases and dentistry, and in experimental psychotherapy. It is being abused by an increasing number of young people as a "club drug," and is often distributed at "raves" and parties.

What Are Some of Its Street Names?

Some street names for ketamine are: K, Ket, Special K, Vitamin K, Vit K, Kit Kat, Keller, Kelly's day, Green, Blind squid, Cat valium, Purple, Special la coke, Super acid, and Super C. Slang for experiences related to ketamine or effects of ketamine include, "k-hole," "K-land," "baby food," and "God."

How Is It Being Abused?

Ketamine is a liquid and the most potent ways of using it are by injecting it intramuscularly or intravenously. There is the risk of losing motor control before injection is completed. Ketamine also can be made into a tablet or a powder by evaporating the liquid and reducing it to a fine white powder that can be smoked or snorted. Because of its appearance, Ketamine is often mistaken for cocaine or crystal methamphetamine. Some reports indicate it is sometimes sold as MDMA (Ecstasy) and mixed with other drugs such as ephedrine and caffeine. "Cafeteria use" -- the use of a number of hallucinogenic and sedative/hypnotic club drugs such as MDMA, GHB, LSD, and illegally used prescription drugs -- is reported almost everywhere in the U.S.

What Are Ketamine's Effects?

Ketamine produces a dissociative state in a user. Effects can range from rapture to paranoia to boredom. The user feels its hallucinogenic effects and experiences impaired perception. Ketamine commonly elicits an out-of-body or near-death experience; it can render the user comatose. Ketamine is similar molecularly to phencyclidine (PCP--or

"Angel Dust") and thus creates similar effects including numbness, loss of coordination, sense of invulnerability, muscle rigidity, aggressive/violent behavior, slurred or blocked speech, exaggerated sense of strength, and a blank stare. There is depression of respiratory function but not of the central nervous system, and cardiovascular function is maintained. Since ketamine is an anesthetic, it stops the user from feeling pain, which could lead the user to inadvertently cause injury to himself/herself. Ketamine may relieve tension and anxiety, is purported to be a sexual stimulant, and intensifies colors and sounds.

The effects of a ketamine 'high' usually last an hour but they can last for 4-6 hours, and 24-48 hours are generally required before the user will feel completely "normal" again. Effects of chronic use of ketamine may take from several months to two years to wear off completely. Low doses (25-100mg) produce psychedelic effects quickly. Large doses can produce vomiting and convulsions and may lead to oxygen starvation to the brain and muscles; one gram can cause death. Flashbacks may even occur one year after use. Long-term effects include tolerance and possible physical and/or psychological dependence.

Is Ketamine Legal?

Yes, but only for medical uses. It is marketed as Ketalar, or Ketaset, to veterinarians and medical personnel and considered a controlled substance only in California, Connecticut, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. A bill was introduced in Congress in the spring of 1997 to classify ketamine as a Schedule II drug, having a high abuse potential with severe psychic or physical dependence liability. Cocaine and methamphetamine are other examples of Schedule II drugs.

Is Ketamine Use Spreading?

According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, ketamine is an emerging drug in San Diego, New York, Miami, Newark (DE). Its use is also being reported in New Jersey, D.C., Florida, and Georgia.

Sources

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