



*Educate Yourself*

# FACTS about DRUGS: KETAMINE

## WHAT IS IT?

Ketamine is a “dissociative anesthetic,” meaning it causes users to feel detached or disconnected from their pain and environment. The drug’s effects are similar to phencyclidine (PCP).

Available in pill, powder and liquid form, Ketamine is a regulated substance used for medical purposes, including veterinary anesthesia. Its distribution is closely monitored and possession for non-medical uses is punishable by law.

## SLANG

K, Special K, vitamin K, Ketalar, Ketaset, Lady K. Ketamine users may refer to the experience and/or effect of the drug as tripping, K-ing or the K-hole.

## AVAILABILITY & USE

Ketamine is more easily available outside of the United States where violations are less severely punished. In the United States, it cannot be sold over-the counter or produced, distributed, or possessed by anyone using it for non-medical purposes. A typical dose costs \$20-25 (Drug Enforcement Administration 2001).

Recreational users of Ketamine sometimes inject or drink the liquid. More often they cook it into a white powder for snorting. When swallowed, Ketamine produces physical effects of pain killing, numbing, and sedation. Depending on the method of ingestion, the effects of Ketamine can be felt within four to twenty minutes (DanceSafe).

## RATES OF USE

During the last two decades, Ketamine’s popularity as a potent psychedelic increased when it appeared in the electronic music scene. In 2002, 1 percent of eighth graders and 2 percent of tenth and twelfth graders had tried Ketamine at some point during the past year (Johnston 2003).

## THE RISKS

According to reports from the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) forty-six deaths were reported by American medical examiners in connection with Ketamine from 1994 through 1999. It is easy to become injured when inebriated or in the “K-hole” (see Slang). These accidents can be fatal.

A new user of Ketamine may not be prepared for its powerful psychedelic effects.

Ketamine can be psychologically compelling and lead to dependence. Frequent use can cause disruptions in consciousness and lead to neuroses or other mental disorders (Jansen 2001).

Ketamine has been labeled a “date-rape drug,” because under the influence a person can become unconscious or unable to move, therefore unable to respond to an attack.

Illegal use of Ketamine can result in long prison terms.

Reducing risk requires not taking Ketamine alone or with strangers; choosing a safe environment (away from bodies of water, heights, fire, and motor vehicles); not mixing the drug with depressants such as alcohol, benzodiazapines, opiates, or GHB; avoiding injection or using Ketamine if a heart condition or glaucoma exists; using moderation; and calling 911 immediately if there are signs of problems (Jansen 2001).

To eliminate risk associated with Ketamine use, unapproved use should be avoided.

## THE HIGH

The effects of Ketamine vary depending on the dosage (Drug-Scope). In small doses it causes a dreamy floating feeling. The user will experience a distancing from their environment and body. Hands and feet will feel numb and can be difficult to manipulate.

When under the influence, emotions can fluctuate quickly. Users may be inclined to get up and dance, but higher doses will make it difficult to move. The inability to move is referred to as being in a “K-hole” (see Slang) (DanceSafe).

Very high doses cause a person to become anesthetized or lose consciousness. They will not wake up—even if they become injured, because they are not aware of their body or their surroundings. They may experience vivid and powerful psychedelic effects (Jansen 2001). Some people may not remember their experiences.

## SIGNS OF USE

A person who has taken or been given Ketamine will be very clumsy—dangerously so—even more so than someone who is very drunk, because he or she may feel stimulated and free from bodily danger. Ketamine users may express excitement and amazement one moment and completely different emotions the next. They may display slurred speech, say odd things, and express confusion. Their heart rate may increase.

A large amount of Ketamine will result in the user not being able to move. They may collapse and remain prone. They might appear to be awake but unresponsive, or appear lifeless. Vomiting is possible.

## RECOMMENDED READING

Jansen, Karl MD, PhD. 2001. *Ketamine: Dreams and Realities*. Sarasota, FL: Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies. ISBN: 0966001931.

## REFERENCES

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Johnston, L.D., P.M. O'Malley and J.G. Bachman. 2003. *Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2002. Volume 1: Secondary school students*. Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse. <http://monitoringthefuture.org>.

**FACTS about DRUGS: KETAMINE** - [www.safety1st.org](http://www.safety1st.org)

## ABOUT SAFETY FIRST

Safety First, a project of the Drug Policy Alliance, is dedicated to providing parents of adolescents with honest, science-based information about drugs and drug education. For more information, visit [www.safety1st.org](http://www.safety1st.org).

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