



KETAMINE

Green, K, Special K, Super K, Vitamin K, Donkey dust

A factsheet from

DrugWise

Ketamine is a powerful anaesthetic used medically in operations on humans and animals. Unlike most anaesthetics, ketamine does not slow breathing.

Ketamine can cause a loss of feeling and numbness of the muscles. Users may feel sick and detached from their environment - sometimes referred to as floating. Hallucinations may be experienced, which, at high doses, may include an out-of-body sensation called the 'K Hole'. Flashbacks of these hallucinations are possible.

Pharmaceutical ketamine is usually in liquid form. Tablets and a white crystalline powder are most commonly seen on the street. Powdered ketamine is often snorted, though it may be swallowed.

If sniffed the effects of ketamine generally come on quickly and can last from about 20 minutes to a couple of hours.



The law

Ketamine is a Class B drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. (It was reclassified from Class C in June 2014). Penalties for possession are up to five years in prison and/or an unlimited fine. Supply holds penalties of up to 14 years in prison and/or an unlimited fine.

However, maximum sentences are unlikely to be given in practice.

Prevalence

According to Home Office statistics published in 2016, ketamine use fell among 16 to 59 year olds, from 0.5 to 0.3%. The figures showed that around 94,000 adults had used ketamine in the last year. The use of ketamine has remained steady between 0.3 and 0.6% since the start of its measurement in the 2006/07 survey.



Health risks and harm reduction



Repeated or heavy use of ketamine appears to be very harmful to the urinary system, causing ulcerative cystitis. Some individuals have had to have their bladders removed. There is evidence that heavy use can lead to physical and psychological dependence. It is better to reduce your use of the drug gradually.

High doses may lead to blackouts and temporary paralysis, and coordination can be severely affected making accidents more likely. Therefore it is a good idea to be with people you trust and in a safe place if taking the drug. Ketamine should not be used with alcohol or other depressant drugs.