

What is Ketamine – Range of harms and effects

Ketamine, also known or referred to as “ket”, “k”, “Kenny” and is usually sold as a white/beige powder that will usually be snorted/sniffed. By law, it is an illegal Class B drug.

Ketamine powder is a “anesthetic” this means it can reduce awareness, sensitivity to pain and ability to move or speak normally. It can also impair decision-making, cause disorientation and confusion, lead to hallucinations, create feelings of euphoria and limbs feel heavy.

In higher doses it may cause intense ‘trance-like’ out-of-body experiences (known as a “k-hole”). Effects vary depending on the amount taken and whether it’s mixed with alcohol or other drugs.

Harms can develop quickly and are wide ranging, including stomach pains, memory problems, low mood or depression, with feeling the need to start using more to get the same effect (tolerance). As ketamine is usually snorted/sniffed it can also damage the nose and nasal passages, causing nose bleeds, soft tissue damage. Using ketamine regularly can lead to severe, and sometimes permanent bladder damage.

Signs of regular ketamine use

Regular use may lead to physical and mental health problems. Some early signs that, parents / carers and friends and family may notice include:

- **Nasal issues:** Constant sniffing, runny nose, nose bleeds
- **Dissociation:** Vacant, trance like expression, difficulty moving or speaking normally.
- **‘Toileting’ problems:** Going to the toilet very frequently or urgently; pain when urinating (which may be confused with a urinary tract infection); urine may be blood stained; possible incontinence (including bed-wetting).
- **Stomach problems:** Stomach cramps and pain are sometimes referred to as ‘K cramps’.
- **Increased use of painkillers:** or frequently asking for them or hot water bottle use.
- **Changes in mental health:** Low mood or depression, memory problems, poor concentration, flashbacks.
- **Behavioral changes:** Increased isolation or withdrawal from family/friends, erratic or impulsive behavior, neglecting school work or hobbies.
- **Drug-related items:** Finding small bags of white powder in belongings or bedrooms
- **Financial concerns:** Unexplained debt, or signs of exploitation.

Noticing early warning signs and seeking help and support may prevent any significant harms happening.

Where to for treatment, support & advice about drugs/alcohol?

River is our free and confidential community drug and alcohol service which supports people of any age and their families in Liverpool who are experiencing difficulties with substances.

You can make a **self-referral** or can **make a referral on someone else's behalf** (with their consent) or **speak to a local specialist for advice confidentially**.

Referrals and contact



www.riversupportservices.org.uk

- Professional referrals
- Self-referrals
- Service information
- Service user self-help tools



0151 706 7888

Adult number

0151 706 9747

Children & YP number

Office phone hours:

Mon-Thurs 9am – 7pm

Fri 9am – 5pm

Sat & Sun 9am – 1pm

Outside of office hours, phone lines will be diverted to a **24-hour SPOC** for any urgent calls.

The QR code below is a quick link to the RIVER drug and alcohol support service Children & Young People webpage – containing lots more information about Ketamine and other drugs.

