

KETAMINE

Trade name Ketalar, Ketajet, Ketaset
A.K.A. Special K or Ket or Vitamin K

By Trinka Porrata

Abuse of ketamine (pronounced Kee-ta-meen) goes hand in hand with gamma hydroxy butyrate (GHB) and MDMA (Ecstasy). Where you find one, you will likely find the others. All three are very popular with the RAVE party crowd. Ketamine hcl, a cat tranquilizer and the most commonly used anesthetic in the Vietnam War, is also used in sexual assault on occasion since it puts the victim in a frozen state for at least a brief period of time. It was big in the 70's with New Age types like Dr. John Lilly (the model for the William Hurt character in the movie Altered States) and Timothy Leary.



Ketamine comes in injectable form, liquid, for legitimate use. It is most commonly dried (oven or microwave or air). The crusty residue is ground to a fine powder and is then most commonly inhaled.

In order for a vial of ketamine to be in an abuser's hand, someone has already smuggled it in from Mexico or robbed or burglarized a vet clinic or pharmacy, or in some other manner diverted the product for illicit use. In spite of that fact, ketamine is a Schedule III Controlled Substance. It should more appropriately be a Schedule II substance so that doctors and vets have to control their inventory of ketamine and provide security for it.

Ketamine is essentially a less-potent version of PCP. While ketamine and GHB and MDMA provide out of body experiences and whack reality quite a bit, it is still a bit below the out-to-lunch level of PCP trips. But, of course, that varies with the amount taken and other drugs combined with it. And, flashbacks from ketamine are common.

One Ket user stated, "If you take enough [it will] give you a preview of your own death, put you in contact with seraph-like entities, and convince you that you've just seen God in a disco ball." True RAVERS boast that they don't drink and drive like their parents. Instead, they plan to spend 14 hours or so at a party. They do their drugs and more drugs, and pass out, and then wake up and drive. With increasing "semi underground" (such as at fairgrounds and other unsuspecting locations) and "above ground" (setting up special events at legitimate clubs and facilities) RAVES, there is an increase in driving under the influence issues. This is partly because these events have closing times, dumping the partygoers into the street under the influence of their drugs. Above ground RAVES typically involve alcohol also.

Like GHB and Rohypnol and MDMA, ketamine has been around for a long time. Abuse levels wavered in the 1980s but during the 1990s have been on a steady rise. . Physicians also sometimes personally abuse it. For example, the California Medical Board has investigated and taken the license of one plastic surgeon that liked to take it prior to doing surgery. Besides the techno music RAVE set, ketamine is commonly encountered in homosexual communities.

Ketamine is a psychedelic anesthetic classified medically as a dissociative anesthetic, discovered by Dr. Cal Stevens of Wayne State University in 1961. Heavily used on the battlefields of Vietnam, it is used today for short-term surgical procedures in both animals and humans. For human consumption, it is marketed as Ketalar by Parke-Davis.

It is sold legitimately only to hospitals and physicians. Since it does not depress critical body vitals as much as other anesthetics, it is often used in procedures with burn victims, for example. It produces a dissociative state in the central nervous system in which amnesia and profound analgesia (loss of pain) are induced, though the patient does not appear to be asleep. This ability to induce a lack of awareness to the environment is the effect abusers crave. It is NOT a "take home" drug that a vet would "prescribe" or give to a pet owner. Don't fall for the line, "Oh, my vet gave it to me for my cat."

It may produce pleasant dream-like states, vivid imagery, hallucinations and possibly extreme delirium. This usually lasts only a few hours. Excitement and visual disturbances can recur days or weeks after exposure to ketamine; the problem with "flashbacks" may be greater with ketamine than with other hallucinogens. It also produces ataxia, slurring of speech, dizziness, confusion, blurred vision, anxiety and insomnia. It can also cause cessation of breathing, cardiac arrest, brain damage and death.

Signs of being under the influence may vary greatly. It may product bursts of energy, disorientation and mild-to-severe hallucinations. The effects are much briefer than PCP, lasting only 30-60 minutes versus hours. In larger doses or mixed with alcohol, it may produce vomiting (which is also commonly associated

with GHB use).

It is not produced clandestinely, since it involves a complicated, multi-step synthesis and because the necessary chemicals are not readily available. It comes in injectable form, liquid, for legitimate use. It is most commonly dried (oven or microwave or air). The crusty residue is ground to a fine powder and most commonly inhaled. The liquid may be injected, applied to smokable material or consumed in drinks. Powdered K has been encountered in one-inch ziplock baggies, paper folds or capsules.

Amnesia may be present for one to two hours. A dose of just 0.07 grams of powder may produce common symptoms of intoxication and a mechanical buzzing in the user's ears. Users of 0.2 grams may enter the mellow, colorful "K-land," while 0.5 grams is more likely to take you to the "K-Hole," with out-of-body, near death encounters, hallucinations and delirium, etc. Effects usually last an hour or less, but judgement, coordination and senses may be affected for 18 to 24 hours.

Most commonly called Ket, K or Special K, it may also be referred to as Green (apparently for the green label on the Ketajet box). Other names include 1980 Acid, Super C, Vitamin K, Super Acid, Special LA Coke, Baby Food (users sink into blissful, infantile inertia) and God (because users often are convinced they have met their maker), Jet (Texas), Honey Oil, Blast, and Gas. A dose is called a "bump." The K-hole is where you go when on it. K-head is a user. Calvin Klein refers to a combo of cocaine and ketamine. Product 19 refers to a combo of MDMA and ketamine.

While ketamine is approved for commercial use as a veterinary product in cats and monkeys for short-duration surgery or immobilization, it is also used in human medicine. For example:

- ▶ Ketamine is still used as an anesthetic for children in whom the unpleasant emergence reactions aren't an issue.
- ▶ Ketamine was used for battlefield injuries (Vietnam and elsewhere) for rapid induction.
- ▶ Ketamine has been used for repeated procedures such as radiation therapy and the changing of burn dressings in which analgesia (pain reduction) is desired by deep anesthesia is not required or may even be dangerous (depressing vitals).

Tolerance and psychological dependence can develop with daily exposure. Chronic users may have short-term memory loss, impaired vision or attention span limitations. A number of Ketamine-related deaths have been recorded across the nation.

Contact: k@projectghb.org

