

Ketamine : gay men, sex and drugs / Terrence Higgins Trust.

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Gay men, sex and drugs

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KETAMINE

What's the score?

Ketamine is also known as: K, Special K, Vitamin K.

K is an anaesthetic – it's sometimes referred to as 'horse tranquiliser'. It's one of the chems used in dance clubs or during sex.

Ketamine can come as a powder or a liquid that's dried to make the powder.

Taking Ketamine

As a powder K can be snorted (known as a bump) or added to drinks (but not alcohol). It can be smoked if the powder's mixed in a joint with cannabis and tobacco. Ketamine powder can also be mixed with water and injected into a muscle (but never a vein). K can also come as a pill.

Highs and lows

Ketamine can boost your energy levels (in small doses), or make you feel high, numb, cut off from your body, or in a dreamy, floating state. K can cause hallucinations and an out of body experience (sometimes described as like entering a different reality, meeting God, aliens, etc).

The effects last 45-90 minutes if snorted and up to three hours if injected or swallowed.

Side effects of K can include dizziness, feeling sick, throwing up (risky as you might choke on your vomit if you've passed out), feeling disorientated, blurred sight and speech.

A large enough dose can cut you off from your surroundings and sense of self. This is called a K hole and can last up to 90 minutes. You might find it hard or impossible to move or talk. Swallowing or breathing can be difficult.

A long term relationship?

Overdose deaths are rare, but you can build up a tolerance to K, with more needed to get the same result. Some people become dependent on it.

Using ketamine long term might cause anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts or memory loss.

Ketamine with other drugs

Depressants ('downers' like alcohol, GHB/GBL, Valium, barbiturates) – as K and other depressants slow the body and its functions down, the combined effect can knock you out and/or slow your breathing to a dangerous level.

HIV drugs – some of these, especially protease inhibitors, can cause higher levels of ketamine in your body.

Tobacco/cannabis – smoking cigarettes or joints carries a risk of fires (if K makes you unable to move) or burns (if K's anaesthetic effect stops you feeling a burn).

Useful to know

Someone in a K hole should be taken away from music and bright lights and reassured it'll be over soon and they'll be OK.

Injecting K is best avoided. It's more likely to lead to dependence or overdose.

If you share your injecting equipment there's a real risk of getting or passing on infections such as HIV or hepatitis C. Injecting can also cause skin abscesses, blood poisoning, life-threatening blood clots or heart infections.

K should be avoided by people who have fits, high blood pressure or heart or liver problems.

The law

Ketamine is a Class C drug.

Possession can mean up to two years in prison and/or an unlimited fine.

Supplying (including giving it to mates) can mean up to 14 years in jail and/or an unlimited fine.



Sex on Ketamine

Although ketamine can make you feel horny, it can make it difficult to get a hard-on or come. K is used by some fisters as it relaxes arse muscles. As the drug makes you feel pain less, rough sex can lead to damage (eg. inside your arse) or cuts and bleeding that aren't noticed. This may mean more risk of HIV, hepatitis C and other infections being passed on.

Ketamine can lower your inhibitions, which might lead to unsafe sex.



More info

If you'd like to talk to someone with lots of experience of drug-related issues, there's:

One-2-One counselling with a drugs counsellor at **Terrence Higgins Trust's** London offices. It's **free** of charge and to see if this would be useful for you, call our **Wellbeing Service** on **0207 812 1777**.

Or you can ask one of the **LADS** outreach team (identifiable in venues and cruising areas by their LADS stand, t-shirts and ID badges) about speaking to our drugs worker.

Also, check out www.tht.org.uk / **DrueFucked**

Antidote

A London service gay and bisexual men concerned about their alcohol or drug use can make use of, with weekly drop-in, one-to-one counselling, support groups and more. Call **020 7287 8743** or go to www.thehungerford.org/antidote.asp

Talk To Frank

Information and support around alcohol and drug use. Call the 24 hour helpline on **0800 77 66 00** or contact by email, details from their website. Also, check out the 'need help' section of the site, www.talktofrank.com