

Ketamine is a type of drug known as a “dissociative anesthetic.” It can affect how you feel, taste, and see. Ketamine is mostly used in veterinary settings as a liquid to relax or sedate animals. Ketamine used outside medical settings usually comes as a powder that people snort, but it can also be injected, eaten, or inserted rectally when diluted in water.

## What are the effects?

The effects of ketamine usually start five to 15 minutes after use and can last up to two hours:

- At low doses, it can make someone feel like they are floating.
- At higher doses, it can lead to someone losing control of their body or feeling like they are floating outside their body (known as a “k-hole”). Some people enjoy this experience, but it can be alarming if it happens unexpectedly.

Some effects could mean a ketamine overdose, including dizziness, increased heart rate or heart palpitations (the heart beating fast or feeling like it is skipping beats), confusion, anxiety, hallucinations, abnormal eye movements, and increased blood pressure.



If you think someone is having a medical emergency, call **911**.

## What are the health risks?

### In the short term:

- Ketamine may cause dizziness, nausea, headache, blurred vision, and sleepiness, as well as increased blood pressure and heart rate.
- Ketamine, when combined with opioids, alcohol, GHB (gamma hydroxybutyrate), benzodiazepines, or other depressants (substances that slow down the central nervous system), may cause vomiting, spinning, blackouts, and loss of consciousness (passing out).
- Being in a k-hole may cause someone to be unable to move their body or fall if they are standing, possibly making them more vulnerable to assault if they are left alone or in an unsafe location.




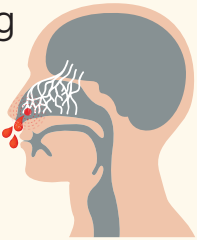
### In the long term:

- Ketamine may cause physical dependence (needing to keep using ketamine to feel its effects), memory loss, mood disorders, reduced brain function, and bladder problems (for example, incontinence, blood in urine, or pain). These effects may be irreversible.
- The effects of ketamine may vary from person to person and depend on how much, how long, and how frequently someone uses it.



## How can I reduce my risk of harm?

### If you plan on using ketamine from nonmedical sources:

- Take your ketamine (pills or powder) to one of the NYC Health Department's drug-checking locations to have it tested for harmful ingredients or other drugs you do not plan on using (such as fentanyl).
  - While not common, fentanyl has been found in drugs sold as ketamine.
  - For more information about drug checking, as well as where and when you can get drugs tested, visit **nyc.gov/alcoholanddrugs** or email **drugchecking@health.nyc.gov**.
- Go slow. Use small amounts to test the strength of your ketamine.
- Avoid using alone and take turns.
  - If you are going to use alone, tell someone you trust so they can check on you, or call the Never Use Alone hotline at 877-696-1996 before using. Peer operators can monitor for safety on the phone, 24/7 — no judgment.
- Prepare your ketamine on a clean surface and avoid sharing equipment (including straws, spoons, syringes, and needles) used to prepare, snort, or inject.

- Snorting can cause tears inside your nose that can increase your risk of infections.
- Crush ketamine as finely as possible with a clean tool (such as a bank card or plastic razor) and switch between nostrils to minimize damage to your nose.

## How do I respond to a ketamine overdose?

A person in a k-hole may not be overdosing or need medical attention. However, for safety, the person should be monitored until the effects wear off in case medical care is needed.

People who use ketamine may also use other drugs, such as opioids. Always carry naloxone — a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose — in case you encounter someone who may be experiencing an opioid overdose.



Contact 988 for free, confidential crisis counseling, mental health and substance use support, and referrals to care. Call or text 988 or chat at **nyc.gov/988**. Text and chat services are available in English and Spanish, and counselors are available by phone 24/7 in more than 200 languages.

For more information, visit **nyc.gov/alcoholanddrugs** or scan the QR code.

