What are the health risks of ketamine?

Some risks of ketamine have only recently been discovered, for example it can cause serious bladder damage. In fact, it’s risky in a number of ways.

- Because you don’t feel pain properly when you’re on ketamine, you can injure yourself badly and not know you’ve done it.
- High doses, especially when taken with other substances like alcohol, benzodiazepines or opiates, can dangerously affect the way you breathe and how your heart works, and can lead to unconsciousness, which can be even more dangerous if vomit is inhaled. If high doses are taken, it can cause death. And it is certainly not safe to mix alcohol and ketamine.
- Ketamine can also be very dangerous when mixed with ecstasy or amphetamines, when it can cause high blood pressure.
- Ketamine causes very serious bladder problems, with severe pain and difficulty passing urine.
- Abdominal pain or ‘K cramps’ have been reported by many long-term users.
- Injecting ketamine can damage the veins and can cause serious problems such as abscesses (swollen areas of tissue that are full of pus) and blood clots. Sharing injecting equipment, including needles and syringes, risks infection with hepatitis C and B viruses and HIV.
- With regular or large doses, ketamine can make existing mental health problems worse, and can cause feelings of confusion, panic attacks and depression.

What is ketamine cut with?

Users won’t know whether any ketamine they get through a dealer, even a friend, is definitely ketamine or whether it has been contaminated (or ‘cut’) with any other substances. Only medicinal ketamine would be reliably pure.

Illegally produced ketamine tablets are commonly found with ephedrine added (commonly used for treatment of allergies and asthma). Sometimes, these pills are mixed with ketamine and passed off as ecstasy.

Can you get addicted to ketamine?

The simple answer is – yes – you can become addicted to it. This means regular users feel the need to keep taking ketamine, in spite of the effects on their health. Regular users can also develop tolerance to ketamine, which means they need to take increasing amounts to get the same effects.

There are no physical withdrawal symptoms, so ketamine addiction is sometimes called a ‘psychological dependence’. Dependence is just another name for addiction.