Signs of ketamine addiction

Ketamine is a hydrochloride salt used as an anesthetic in veterinary medicine and certain medical situations for humans as well. In addition to pain relief, ketamine has hallucinogenic properties. For this reason, it has become a popular club drug that is either snorted or injected. In July 2011, the BBC reported that, in the UK, ketamine use had risen in the previous decade. In the U.S., the National Drug Intelligence Centre estimated that nearly 75% of the ketamine-related emergency room visits in 2000 were for young people between the ages of 12 and 25. In a national survey, about 3% of high school seniors had taken the drug during the previous year. Ketamine, often in combination with other drugs, has been implicated in a number of crimes including date rape. The list below outlines some possible signs that a person may be addicted to ketamine.

- **Sensory Distortion and/or Impairment** – A person who has recently taken ketamine may complain that they are not hearing or seeing (from double vision, involuntary eye movements, and/or increased intraocular pressure) normally. This symptom may last as long as 24 hours after use.

- **Poor Coordination** – Ketamine use can make it more difficult for a person to engage in both large and fine motor tasks. May persist for up to 24 hours following use of ketamine.

- **Sexual Risk-Taking or Victimization** – As mentioned, the drug has been used by predators for date and other types of rape. Individuals who are taking ketamine voluntarily for recreational purposes may be less inhibited and have poor judgment, which may lead to engaging in risky sexual behaviours that they may regret or not even remember later.

- **Depression and Other Mood Disturbances** – Both ketamine use and the psychological withdrawal symptoms that can result if an addicted person does not continue to take it may lead to depression, anxiety, and other changes in mood.

- **Blackouts** – Ketamine can cause full or partial amnesia.

- **Substance-Induced Psychosis** – Use of ketamine may cause a person to have a psychotic episode (when they say, believe, or do things that are not consistent with reality); similarly, withdrawal after extended use has been associated with psychotic features in some addicts.

- **Frequent Club, Rave, or Party Attendance** – Ketamine is only one of a number of substances that are considered to be “club drugs”; others include LSD, meth, and MDMA.

- **Slowed Breathing** – If ketamine has been injected, the person may exhibit depressed respiration; however, if administered via slower routes, the opposite (faster breathing) has been reported to occur.

Like any addiction, an addiction to ketamine should be taken seriously. If you suspect or have confirmed that your child, spouse, relative, or friend is using ketamine, an intervention may be warranted. Even if the person is only “experimenting” with ketamine or other substances, it is also important to regularly discuss your family’s position about substances with your children or teens.