

Ketamine: Nature and Effects

Ketamine

("K," "Special K," "cat Valium") is a dissociative anesthetic developed in 1963 to replace PCP and currently used in human anesthesia and veterinary medicine. Much of the ketamine sold on the street has been diverted from veterinarians' offices. Although it is manufactured as an injectable liquid, in illicit use ketamine is generally evaporated to form a powder that is snorted or compressed into pills.

Ketamine's

chemical structure and mechanism of action are similar to those of PCP, and its effects are similar, but ketamine is much less potent than PCP with effects of much shorter duration. Users report sensations ranging from a pleasant feeling of floating to being separated from their bodies. Some ketamine experiences involve a terrifying feeling of almost complete sensory detachment that is likened to a near-death experience. These experiences, similar to a "bad trip" on LSD, are called the "K-hole."

Ketamine is odorless and tasteless, so it can be added to beverages without being detected, and it induces amnesia. Because of these properties, the drug is sometimes given to unsuspecting victims and used in the commission of sexual assaults referred to as "drug rape."

Source: The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

Image Source: Drug Enforcement Agency

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