

## Ketamine Information Guide

The recreational use of ketamine is on the rise, with recent data indicating a significant increase in usage, seizures, and related health complications in the UK and Europe.

The drug has seen a dramatic rise among young adults and children, with usage among 16-24-year-olds in England tripling since 2016. Some areas report usage in schools and among teenagers as young as 10-15.

Ketamine is a drug that was originally developed as an anaesthetic but has been increasingly used recreationally. Regular or prolonged usage can cause serious damage to the bladder and urinary tract, leading to symptoms such as pain, urgency, frequency, and difficulty holding urine.

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## Why this matters...



Presentations are often non-specific



Frequently missed or misdiagnosed



Delay in recognition can lead to irreversible bladder and renal damage

Although relatively uncommon, ketamine misuse should remain a differential diagnosis in unexplained symptoms.

Specialist drug services such as Change Grow Live and CASUS can offer detox support and complex case management.

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## What are the signs and complications?

- Frequent and/or painful urination- urinary tract damage (ketamine-induced cystitis)
- Severe stomach pain, often called k-cramps
- Loss of Coordination
- Slurred speech
- Mental health challenges
- Numbness to pain
- Nasal damage and/or nosebleeds if snorted
- Nausea and vomiting
- Involuntarily rapid eye movement
- Dilated pupils
- Salivation
- Stiffening of the muscles
- Gastrointestinal and hepatobiliary complications
- Disassociation (sometimes called K hole)

# Ketamine in LUTS

(Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms)

Ask specifically about ketamine use in patients presenting with:



**Urinary  
frequency**



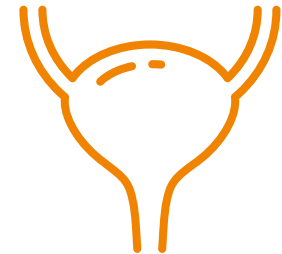
**Urgency**



**Pain or discomfort  
during or after  
urination**



**Lower  
abdominal  
pain**



**Ketamine-associated  
bladder dysfunction  
is increasingly  
recognised and often  
underreported.**

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## Ketamine screening and consent questions

Are you currently using ketamine, or have you used ketamine in the last 6 months? ( Y / N )

Have you noticed any changes in your urination, such as peeing more often, urgency, getting up at night, leaking, or difficulty holding urine? ( Y / N )

Do you have pain when passing urine, bladder pain, lower abdominal pain, back pain, or flank pain? ( Y / N )

Have you noticed blood in your urine, clots, cloudy or smelly urine, fever, or feeling generally unwell? ( Y / N )

Has ketamine affected other areas of your health (e.g. stomach pain, constipation, nose problems, liver concerns), and are you interested in support to reduce or stop using? ( Y / N )

**Please consider consent when referring to urology and treatment services**

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**Preventing further urological harm involves person-centred support to reduce or stop ketamine use, recognising that immediate cessation may not be achievable for everyone.**

- Cessation is the key intervention
- Ongoing use will limit or prevent treatment effectiveness
- Symptomatic treatments may help slightly, but they do not reverse underlying bladder damage if use continues

## **Withdrawal Management**

Since there is no substitute medication (unlike opioids), treatment focuses on symptom relief and psychosocial support, especially for anxiety and pain.



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## Psychosocial Management

Working alongside local drug and alcohol treatment services, with a long-term focus on abstinence and relapse prevention, an effective treatment plan can support service users in addressing drug use and building recovery capital.

Change Grow Live and CASUS can assist with setting realistic, person-centred goals, assessing readiness to change, and providing regular follow-up and psychosocial interventions.

## How to refer to specialist services:


Referral to specialist substance misuse services, such as Change Grow Live, should be considered where appropriate to ensure ongoing structured support. They can also facilitate onward referral to detoxification and residential rehabilitation services where clinically indicated.

### Change Grow Live (Adult services)

 [www.cgl.org.uk](http://www.cgl.org.uk)


#### Cambridgeshire

 [cambridgeshirereferrals@cgl.org.uk](mailto:cambridgeshirereferrals@cgl.org.uk)

 0300 5550101

### Peterborough (Aspire) all age service


 [peterborough@cgl.org.uk](mailto:peterborough@cgl.org.uk)

 01733 895624

### CASUS (Young people up 21)

 [www.cpft.nhs.uk/casus](http://www.cpft.nhs.uk/casus)

 [casus@cpft.nhs.uk](mailto:casus@cpft.nhs.uk)

 01480 445316

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