

## Patient information

### **Ketamine for the Management of Acute / Complex Pain during your stay in Aintree Hospital**

Pharmacy Dept - Aintree Hospital

#### **What is ketamine, and what is it used for?**

Ketamine is a drug which has been used as an anaesthetic for many years.

More recently it has been used at low doses in the management of severe pain, especially neuropathic (nerve) pain.

It is available to treat pain as an oral liquid.

Ketamine is licensed for use as an anaesthetic.

It also has an 'off license' use for the treatment of pain at lower doses and has been shown to be safe and effective for many years.

It is started on the recommendation of the pain team specialists in hospital.

Your prescribing doctor or nurse will have experience with using ketamine for the management of your pain.

#### **How do I take Ketamine?**

Ketamine will be given as a liquid medication by mouth.

#### **Administration:**

- Patients are usually started with a small oral dose three to four times a day.
- If necessary, this dose will be increased according to your level of pain, under the supervision of the pain team specialist nurses and doctors.
- You will not be discharged from hospital with this drug and your GP is not able to prescribe this.

#### **What should I do if I miss a dose?**

Take it as soon as you remember unless it is near the time of your next scheduled dose.

**Never double a dose to make up for any missed doses.**

## **How quickly will ketamine work?**

This will vary from person to person.

For this indication, ketamine would take a similar amount of time to work to your other painkillers (approximately 30 minutes), before you get adequate pain control.

## **How long will I need to take ketamine?**

This will depend on the type of pain you have and how you respond.

The specialists within the inpatient pain team will discuss this with you further.

Courses are not usually longer than 5 days.

## **Is ketamine addictive?**

If ketamine is not taken as prescribed, it has the potential to become addictive.

However, this would be rare as it is often used in much smaller doses and for short courses.

It is important not to stop taking ketamine suddenly, as this can result in rebound pain (pain that quickly comes back again).

Always discuss with your prescriber before stopping your ketamine.

## **What are the side effects from taking ketamine?**

Tiredness or sleepiness may occur for a short period of time after taking the prescribed dose.

You may also experience a feeling of everything feeling unreal or far away, vivid dreams, nightmares, mood swings, hallucinations, dysphoria (feeling unhappy) and sedation.

These symptoms may be a sign that the dose of ketamine is too high.

Less commonly, increases in blood pressure and heart rate may result from taking ketamine.

These will both be monitored when you start treatment.

Rarely, ketamine may affect the bladder and liver. Report any signs of pain on urination, blood in the urine, the urge to pass urine more frequently, or jaundice (yellowing of the skin) to your doctor.

These symptoms will often resolve when treatment is stopped.

If you suffer from the above side effects please speak with your doctor or pharmacist.

## **Can I take other medicines with ketamine?**

Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will check that it is safe to prescribe ketamine alongside any additional medicines that you take.

Other painkillers such as paracetamol, anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g. ibuprofen) or opioids (e.g. codeine) may be taken at the same time as ketamine.

## **Can I drink alcohol whilst taking ketamine?**

If possible, avoid drinking alcohol whilst taking ketamine, as it may increase the risk of side effects e.g. drowsiness.

A small glass of wine or beer may be allowed but discuss this with your doctor/pharmacist.

## **Who cannot take ketamine?**

Normally, you should not take ketamine if you have:

- Cardiac disease – e.g. IHD (ischaemic heart disease), congestive cardiac failure due to the risk of increased heart rate.
- Head injury or raised intracranial pressure. (This may not apply if ketamine is being used as an anaesthetic).

## **Who should I contact if I need more information?**

You should contact your doctor, pain nurse or pharmacist if you have any further questions on the use of ketamine, or alternatively the Trust's Medicines Information department on 0151 529 3208 (Monday – Friday 08:30 – 17:00).

## **Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

## **Further information**

**Aintree Hospital Medicines Information department  
(Monday – Friday 08:30 – 17:00).  
Tel: 0151 529 3208.**

**Author: Pharmacy – Aintree Hospital  
Review date: April 2026**

All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

يمكن توفير جميع المعلومات المتعلقة بالمرضى الموافق عليهم من قبل انتمان المستشفى عند الطلب بصيغ أخرى، بما في ذلك لغات أخرى وبطرق تسهل قراءتها وبالحروف الطباعية الكبيرة وبالصوت وبطريقة برايل للمكفوفين وبطريقة مون والإلكترونية.

所有經信托基金批准的患者資訊均可以其它格式提供，包括其它語言、易讀閱讀軟件、大字體、音頻、盲文、穆恩體（Moon）盲文和電子格式，敬請索取。

در صورت تمایل میتوانید کلیه اطلاعات تصویب شده توسط اتحادیه در رابطه با بیماران را به اشکال مختلف در دسترس داشته باشید، از جمله به زبانهای دیگر، به زبان ساده، چاپ درشت، صوت، خط مخصوص کوران، مون و بصورت روی خطی موجود است.

زانیاری پنیوندیدار بهو نه خوشانهی له لایین تراستهوه پمساند کراون، ننگر داوا بکریت له فورماتیکانی تردا بریتی له زمانهکانی تر، نیز ی رید (هاسان خویندنهوه)، چاپی گهوره، شریتی دهنگ، هیلی موون و نلیکترونیکی همیه.

所有经信托基金批准的患者信息均可以其它格式提供，包括其它语言、易读阅读软件、大字体、音频、盲文、穆恩体（Moon）盲文和电子格式，敬请索取。

Dhammaan warbixinta bukaanleyda ee Ururka ee la oggol yahay waxaa marka la codsado lagu heli karaa nuskhado kale, sida luqado kale, akhris fudud, far waaweyn, dhegeysi, farta braille ee dadka indhaha la', Moon iyo nidaam eletaroonig ah.