

Ketamine – medicine for pain relief

Why is my child being prescribed ketamine?

Ketamine is prescribed at a low dose pain relief. It is prescribed for neuropathic (nerve) pain and other complex pain.

Nerve pain can respond to morphine and other pain medicines e.g. gabapentin and pregabalin.

Ketamine should be given when:

- The pain is not helped by other regular nerve pain medicines.
- The Pain is not helped by morphine and morphine-like medicines.
- A specialist pain team is involved.

How does ketamine work?

- Ketamine works by changing the way the brain responds to pain.
- A dose of ketamine can take 30 minutes to begin to improve pain. A second dose can be given after one hour if the pain continues. If your child needs two doses, please contact the symptom care team for advice.
- Ketamine will leave the body after 4-6 hours.
- Ketamine could cause short-term memory loss; this reduces your child's pain memory. Your child's pain is complex. It may take time to get the 'right' dose to give good pain relief.

How will my child take ketamine?

Ketamine can be given by mouth (oral), between the cheek and gum (buccal), into the nose (intranasal) and by injection.

Ketamine oral liquid is a special order and can take up to 1 week to arrive. It comes in different flavours. An oral syringe and adapter will be given with the medicine.

At first a small dose will be prescribed; this may need to be increased if your child's pain gets worse. You should only give what is prescribed

What special precautions should I follow?

Ketamine liquid should be kept safely in a cupboard.

What side effects might my child experience when taking ketamine?

- Vomiting
- Fatigue (feeling sleepy)
- Vivid dreams/hallucinations
- Too much saliva/secretions
- Unplanned movements
- Rash
- Increase in heart rate
- High blood pressure
- Poor concentration
- Lack of emotions
- Poor memory
- Dizziness
- Blurred vision.

Vivid dreams and hallucinations are rare but can be distressing. If your child has this, the dose may need to be changed. Please contact the symptom care team for advice.

What are the effects of 'too much' ketamine?

As with any strong pain medicines that can be **fatal** in **large unprescribed** doses, seek emergency advice **immediately** if you think too much of this medicine has been used. These effects may include:

- Extreme drowsiness
- Shallow slow breathing
- Confusion
- Unable to speak
- Abnormal body movements.

What other information should I know?

Tell your specialist team if your child is taking any over-the counter medicines.

Contact details

If you have any questions about this information, please contact:

The Children and Young People's Oncology Outreach and symptom care Nurse Specialist (CYPOONS) team

Tel: 020 8661 3625

Hours: Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm



Evenings, nights, weekends and all bank holidays

Please call The Royal Marsden switchboard, speak to the operator and ask for the **PATCH** service.

The Royal Marsden switchboard: 020 8642 6011

