

## KETAMINE INFUSION

Some doctors may use a low-dose ketamine infusion as a part of the management of an ongoing pain condition to reduce opioid medication. This treatment is considered “off-label” in Australia and New Zealand and more research is needed in this area.

This information comes from the Position Statement of the Faculty of Pain Medicine on the use of ketamine in the management of patients with chronic non-cancer pain. It offers guidance based on the current literature and expert consensus to promote patient safety.

### WHAT IS KETAMINE?

Ketamine is used by medical practitioners as an anaesthetic. Ketamine is a dissociative drug, which means it acts on different chemicals in the brain to produce visual and auditory distortion, and a detachment from reality. It may also have analgesic properties.

### KETAMINE INFUSION IN HOSPITAL

This treatment is considered “off-label”. This means a medicine is used in ways other than specified in the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration approved product information.

The current evidence suggests that potential benefits appear greater than potential harms for

- Reducing opioid use
- Reducing significant flare-up of a long-standing pain condition
- Enhancing the effectiveness of current pain management strategies

In hospital, you will be closely monitored by the experienced team and daily by your treating doctor. Typically, the duration of stay is five to seven days. Infusion can be subcutaneous or intravenous.

There is currently no consensus on the protocol with respect to dose or duration of infusion.

### RISKS & ADVERSE EFFECTS

There is a lack of safety data concerning long-term or repeated treatment.

Ketamine is associated with a variety of adverse effects including psychomimetic (hallucinations or paranoid delusions), cardiovascular, and gastrointestinal effects, resulting from its action on a variety of receptors in the body.

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These may include:

- Loss of consciousness, respiratory depression, tachycardia (fast heartbeat), hypertension (high blood pressure), and severe psychomimetic events including positive and negative signs of schizophrenia.
- Potential for addiction.

### More information

1. Faculty of Pain Medicine Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists. Position Statement on the use of ketamine in the management of chronic non-cancer pain. 2016, Reviewed 2020, Current Document April 2022 <http://www.anzca.edu.au/>