

Cambridgeshire Addaction are currently running a campaign to raise awareness of the risks around the use of ketamine. Led by Lucas Oliver, a Counsellor within the organisation, Addaction have been working with pubs and clubs around Cambridgeshire to promote the realities of ketamine misuse.

Ketamine is a Class C street drug, often used by clubbers at dance music events, and/ or in “chill out”/ post-club settings to manage the side-effects or withdrawal from other (mainly stimulant) “dance drugs”, such as cocaine or ecstasy/ MDMA. However, solitary use is also noted, and it is addictive. Indeed tolerance can rise relatively quickly, with some users struggling not to use after a few days without it, and sometimes consuming several grams per day. It is used by anaesthetists (at very small doses) for its pain-management properties, and it is also used in veterinary medicine.

It is only recently that effects of ketamine misuse have been observed, particularly upon the bladder. Ketamine users with the following symptoms should visit a GP immediately, and discuss a referral to a Urology Department for specialist examination:

- Increased need/ frequent urination
- Urgent need to urinate
- Blood in urine
- Burning sensation when urinating
- Other pain/ discomfort – including severe abdominal pain known as “K cramps”

It is important to seek treatment because the most serious cases can result in kidney failure. It is recommended to contact local drug services for support and further information.

There are a number of other problems which users can encounter from ketamine misuse, including feeling forgetful, vulnerable and anxious. Where the drug is taken nasally, or by injecting, there are also risks in contracting blood borne viruses, such as hepatitis or HIV.

For further information, please contact the Addaction offices on 01223 723020.