

Ketamine Use What Albertans Need to Know

Ketamine is an anesthetic and analgesic that acts rapidly. Common in veterinary surgeries it is now also used in human medicine. It is a dissociative drug: it creates a sense of mind from body separation. The sale, possession, or production of Ketamine is illegal unless authorized for medical, scientific, or industrial purposes.

Ketamine for Depression

In Alberta, ketamine treatment is only legal following strict approvals and then can only be administered to an adult patient who has undergone psychiatric consultation and meets the following criteria:

- A major depressive episode, with an emphasis on acute or potential suicidality or significant functional deficit.
- Failure to respond to pharmacological treatment, with at least two adequate trials of appropriate psychotropic medication.

Short-term Effects

Neurological Effects

- Inability to speak or move
- Feeling sleepy, confused, or losing coordination
- Feelings of weightlessness
- Intense and terrifying hallucinations and feeling that the mind is separated from the body

Physical Effects

- Feeling numb
- Blurry vision
- Difficulty breathing
- High blood pressure and heart rate which may lead to strokes, accidents, or heart attacks
- Reduced response to pain which may lead to more injuries

Long-term Effects

- Long-term use may lead to urinary and bladder problems such as bladder inflammation, painful urination, frequent or urgent urination.
- Long-term neurological effects may include flashbacks, loss of memory, reduced sociability, and attention deficit or dysfunction.

Uses of Ketamine

Ketamine is only legal for use by veterinary surgeons and approved physicians. It is a fast-acting anesthetic and painkiller. Research on psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy, Ketamine Assisted Therapy (KAT), has shown impressive results for treatment-resistant depression and anxiety, PTSD, bipolar affective disorder, and chronic pain. It remains illegal for unapproved use.

Resources – [Ketamine FAQ](#), Ketamine Assisted Therapy Association of Canada

References – Government of Canada: [Ketamine](#)

Alberta Health Services: [Intravenous Ketamine for the treatment of Adult Depression](#)