



Ketamine – advice and support for parents in Halton

Dear Parent/Carer,

Halton Borough Council's Combatting Drug Partnership recently met to raise awareness of the growing use of the drug 'ketamine' (also known as "ket", "k", "Kenny") amongst young people. Ketamine is a drug that more and more young people in Halton and across the country are using without understanding the potential damage it can cause. It is believed that it is becoming particularly popular at parties and other gatherings and children as young as 13-14 have reported to have used it.

What is Ketamine?

Ketamine is an illegal drug which is sold as a white powder. It works like an anaesthetic as it can reduce awareness and sensitivity to pain as well as reducing movement. When used, Ketamine can result in a young person becoming confused, unable to move their arms and legs properly and may lead to very dangerous situations. Because they don't feel pain, it can also result in an injury going unnoticed or untreated.

What are the risks, and what should I look out for?

Regular use can result in physical and mental health problems, some of which parents may be able to recognise at their earliest stages such as:

- An urgent and frequent need to pee which may be confused with a urinary tract infection (UTI).
- Going to the bathroom can often be painful, and urine may be blood stained.
- There may be stomach cramps, sometimes referred to as 'K cramps'.
- Mental health can suffer, including experiences of flashbacks, memory loss and problems with concentration.

The risks of medium to long term use include:

- Damage to the bladder can be serious and sometimes is irreversible. Although stopping using ketamine can help, sometimes the damage to the bladder will need surgery or even removal.
- The urinary tract, from kidneys to the bladder can be affected leading to incontinence, the young person may wet the bed or themselves during the day.
- There is also emerging evidence of liver damage from longer term use.
- Regular use can cause depression, and occasionally psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations. Ketamine can also worsen existing mental health problems.

What can I do if I think my child is using Ketamine?

As parents or carers, we are asking you to be aware of these concerns, speak to your children about what they know or are hearing about Ketamine - if your child is going to

a party speak to them about the availability of drugs and if they are being offered this or seeing other young people using this.

You can access resources and support on speaking to your child about drug use via Talk To Frank: <https://www.talktofrank.com/>

If you are worried that your child may have been using ketamine, if they are showing any symptoms such as needing to go to the bathroom often, chronic pain, blood in their pee, constant sniffing and a runny nose please seek medical attention either through your GP, walk in centre, or in more serious cases A&E.

Young people can also speak to staff in schools, a teacher or pastoral support or school nurse. This will be treated confidentially and non-judgementally with support being sought for your child.

What are we doing in Halton?

Cheshire Police have developed a school ketamine training pack, and they are currently delivering this training to colleges and secondary schools.

The Halton's Public Health team is working in partnership through the Healthy Schools Programme. Schools are being connected to the Police Safer Schools Partnership. The partnership provides opportunities for pupil workshops to address trending key issues.

The Tobacco, Vaping, Drugs and Alcohol training for children and young people is being re-launched in schools.

For advice or help with a young person you can contact the charity VIBE whose mission is to support young people to build positive relationships with themselves and others a senior youth worker can be contacted directly on e-mail - carl.geraghty@vibeuk.org or you can call them directly on 0151 673 0500.

If you are worried about an older person use of drugs (18+) you can call CGL on 0151 422 1400 - please choose option 1 for Widnes and option 2 for Runcorn.

Our Drug and Alcohol Youth Support Service have been working with local schools to offer assemblies, pop up information stands and workshops with young people in the school themed session, parents evenings, training events & conferences throughout the year. They provide friendly and expert advice on drugs and alcohol for young people aged 0 to 18.

The Targeted Drug & Alcohol Youth Team, support young people to understand the effects of their substance misuse and the harm it can cause to them and the people around them. They support young people to make positive behavioural changes to help maintain a healthy lifestyle and help young people reach their full potential.

The team can be contacted during the hours of 9am to 5pm from Monday to Thursday and 9am to 4pm on Friday, call 0151 907 8305.

If you are concerned about drug dealing in your local area you can report this anonymously through Crimestoppers: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/> or Cheshire Police's "Tell Us" website www.cheshire.police.uk/tua/tell-us-about/ if you see a crime taking place and it's an emergency - call 999

Yours faithfully

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