

Information for Patients and Carers

Ketamine Sedation

What is ketamine?

Ketamine is a medicine that makes your child sleepy and reduces pain.

Ketamine has been used safely in children for many years. It is commonly used in emergency departments and has been shown in large studies to be safe and effective.

Why does my child need sedation?

Ketamine is helpful for quick procedures like closing wounds or straightening broken bones before a cast.

We want these procedures to be as comfortable and stress-free as possible for your child. Ketamine helps by reducing pain and distress and allows the doctor to safely complete the procedure.



On the day:

Date: _____

Arrival time: _____

No food from: _____

Clear fluids (water or very weak squash) until: _____

On arrival to the Paediatric Emergency Department (PED)

You will be booked in at the Reception and seen by the triage nurse. Your child will then be checked by the doctor who will be giving the ketamine.

Ketamine is given through a small plastic tube (cannula) placed into a vein. The doctor may use a numbing cream or spray to place the cannula. Your child will then be taken to our Resus room so we can monitor them closely during their sedation and procedure.

It only takes a few minutes to work. Your child will continue to breathe on their own throughout the sedation. You may stay with your child until they are asleep and return as soon as the procedure is finished.

Possible side effects

Most children recover without problems. Side effects can include:

- Extra saliva or tears
- Vivid dreams or seeing things (hallucinations) while waking up (10–20%)
- Vomiting (5–10%)
- Skin rash (around 10%)
- Temporary abnormal movements (less than 5%)
- Breathing problems (less than 1%)

Your child will be closely monitored at all times.

After the sedation

Most children can go home 1–2 hours after the procedure, usually once they are awake and have eaten or drank. The doctors and nurses will ensure your child is safe to go home.

Do I need to treat my child in a special way following the sedation?

No special care is needed. Your child may be sleepy for a while. Some may feel sick or vomit, this usually settles within a few hours. Some children have vivid dreams for a few days.

When might ketamine not be suitable?

Ketamine may not be suitable for children with certain medical conditions, including those with:

- Current chest infection
- Uncontrolled epilepsy
- Certain brain, heart, eye or thyroid conditions
- Significant behavioural issues (e.g. severe autism) or needle phobia that means the child will be unlikely to tolerate the cannula or procedure

If ketamine is not suitable, other options will be discussed. This may include different medicines in the emergency department or admission for a general anaesthetic.

If you have any concerns after going home, please contact the department or seek medical advice.

Paediatric Emergency Department contact number: 0161 701 9101



To access more about this and to be able to read this in different languages, please visit our Paediatric Emergency Department webpage on <https://mft.nhs.uk/rmch/services/paediatric-emergency-department/>



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