



Ketamine infusion

What is a ketamine infusion?

Ketamine is medication commonly used for pain control before, during, and after surgical procedures. More recently, ketamine has been found to be useful in certain chronic pain conditions, such as neuropathic pain (pain coming from nerves), complex regional pain syndrome, and central sensitization. Central sensitization is a hypersensitivity of the nervous system due to constant pain signals being sent to the brain. This is commonly seen in widespread chronic pain conditions, such as fibromyalgia, but it can be seen in any chronic pain syndrome. Ketamine works on receptors in the central nervous system to decrease the intensity of the pain signals coming from painful nerves. This can lead pain relief for chronic pain syndromes associated with both painful and overactive nerves. Your pain management doctor can evaluate your symptoms and decide if this procedure may be right for you.

How is the procedure performed?

A ketamine infusion is done as an outpatient procedure, typically in an ambulatory surgery center. You will receive an IV through which the ketamine will be given slowly over an hour. During this time, you will be monitored by a nurse by your physicians. Since ketamine is an anesthetic, you will feel sedated during this. The properties of ketamine do cause some psychogenic side effects during administration. These can include sedation, dizziness, hallucinations, anxiety and dysphoria (an altered sense of reality). To reduce the side effects, you will be given an IV sedative prior to the administration ketamine. The side effects are generally mild and stop once the infusion is complete. After the infusion is complete, you will be monitored about 30 minutes. After that, you will be allowed to go home to rest and relax for the rest of the day.

How effective is a ketamine infusion?

The effectiveness of a ketamine infusion different for each person. For your initial infusion, your physician will calculate a starting dose based on your weight. Following the infusion, some people see immediate benefit whereas some people may not see a benefit for up to 2 weeks. When successful, the effects of the ketamine continue to provide pain relief for up to 3 months. Depending on the response, the dose can be increased or decreased for future infusions.

What risks are involved with a ketamine infusion?

A ketamine infusion is a low risk. Risks can include increased sedation, dizziness, hallucinations, anxiety, and dysphoria (an altered sensory allergy). However, using safe techniques that include American Society of Anesthesiology standardized monitoring makes a potential complication exceedingly rare.

What happens after a ketamine infusion?

Do not perform any vigorous activity for 12-24 hours after the procedure. You should also not drive for 24 hours after your procedure. You may have lingering effects of the medication, including sleepiness and/or sensitivity to light or sound for the next 24 hours. You can return to normal activities the following day. You will be able to resume your normal diet and medications. Your physician will schedule your follow up appointment.

Is a ketamine infusion right for me?

If you have chronic nerve pain, complex regional pain syndrome, widespread pain, or other chronic pain conditions not responding to treatments, a ketamine infusion may benefit you. Talk to your physician about your symptoms and he or she will help decide what is right for you.