

# OVER THE COUNTER AND GP PRESCRIPTIONS: KETAMINE TOXICITY

In the UK, GPs play a critical role in offering early symptomatic relief for people experiencing ketamine-related harm, especially given long referral waits for urology, gastroenterology, and addiction services. While there are no specific licensed medications for "ketamine toxicity", a GP can manage symptoms arising from:

- ❑ **Bladder and urinary tract issues**
- ❑ **Gastrointestinal irritation**
- ❑ **Liver strain**
- ❑ **Nasal and oral mucosal damage**
- ❑ **Pain and inflammation**
- ❑ **Mental health distress (anxiety, depression, dissociation)**

Area of concern	GP Prescribed	OTC ( <i>Over the Counter</i> )
<p><b>Bladder/Urological Support</b> Ketamine cystitis (KC) or ulcerative cystitis is common in high-frequency users.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> GPs should refer for <b>urgent urology</b> input if symptoms include haematuria, retention, or severe frequency/incontinence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Oxybutynin or Tolterodine</b> – Anticholinergic agents to reduce bladder spasms and urgency.</li> <li>❑ <b>Phenazopyridine</b> (rarely used in UK; more common in US) – Urinary tract analgesic (not routinely prescribed in UK but theoretical).</li> <li>❑ <b>NSAIDs</b> (e.g. Naproxen) – Reduce bladder inflammation and pelvic pain.</li> <li>❑ <b>Amoxicillin, Nitrofurantoin, or Trimethoprim</b> – Short-course antibiotics if UTI is suspected.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Potassium citrate or sodium citrate sachets</b> (e.g. <b>Cymalon, Cystopurin</b>) – Urine alkalinisers to ease burning pain.</li> <li>❑ <b>Paracetamol &amp; ibuprofen</b> – For pelvic or suprapubic discomfort.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Gastrointestinal Support</b>  <i>Norketamine can irritate the GI tract, causing nausea, gastritis, or pain.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Omeprazole or Lansoprazole</b> – Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) to reduce gastric acid and prevent gastritis.</li> <li>❑ <b>Metoclopramide or Prochlorperazine</b> – Anti-nausea medication.</li> <li>❑ <b>Mebeverine or Buscopan (Hyoscine butylbromide)</b> – Antispasmodics for cramping or bowel discomfort.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Gaviscon Advance</b> – For reflux and upper GI irritation.</li> <li>❑ <b>Peppermint oil capsules</b> – For cramping or IBS-type symptoms.</li> <li>❑ <b>Buscopan</b> – Readily available at pharmacies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Liver &amp; Kidney Function</b>  <i>There is no direct pharmaceutical treatment for “norketamine-induced liver stress,” but some supportive options exist.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Regular LFTs and renal function tests</b></li> <li>❑ <b>Avoid paracetamol in high-risk liver patients</b></li> <li>❑ <b>Advice on hydration and diet</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Milk thistle (pharmacy-sold supplements)</b> – Though not medically endorsed, some individuals use it for liver support.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nasal, Sinus, Oral Issues</b>  <i>Chronic snorting causes mucosal breakdown, ulcers, and infections.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Nasal steroid sprays (e.g. Beclometasone)</b> – To reduce chronic inflammation.</li> <li>❑ <b>Saline nasal sprays or rinses</b> – For cleansing and healing.</li> <li>❑ <b>Topical or systemic antibiotics</b> – If ulcers or infections are present.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Sterimar</b> – Saline nasal spray available over the counter.</li> <li>❑ <b>Chlorhexidine mouthwash</b> – For oral ulcers and gum irritation.</li> <li>❑ <b>Oral gels (e.g. Bonjela, Anbesol)</b> – For pain from ulcers or gum damage.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Mental Health Symptoms</b> <i>High-dose ketamine can lead to cognitive disturbance, anxiety, depression, or dissociation.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>SSRIs (e.g. Sertraline)</b> – For depression or generalised anxiety.</li> <li>❑ <b>Short-term diazepam or propranolol</b> – For acute anxiety or agitation (used with caution).</li> <li>❑ <b>Referral to CMHT or addiction psychiatry</b> – For dissociation, psychosis, or suicidal ideation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Valerian root, CBD (low dose)</b> – For mild sleep or anxiety support, with pharmacy advice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pain Management</b> <i>Pain can arise from bladder, sinuses, or GI tract.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>NSAIDs</b> – Ibuprofen, Naproxen for inflammation.</li> <li>❑ <b>Amitriptyline or Gabapentin</b> – If neuropathic pain suspected (especially in bladder/pelvic area).</li> <li>❑ <b>Avoid opioids</b> – Risk of poly-substance use or dependency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Paracetamol, ibuprofen</b></li> <li>❑ <b>Topical gels</b> – If pain is musculoskeletal or peripheral.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nutritional &amp; General Support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Blood tests</b> – Iron, B12, folate, Vitamin D, magnesium.</li> <li>❑ <b>Supplements</b> – Prescribed if deficiencies found.</li> <li>❑ <b>Referral to dietitian</b> – Especially if GI function or eating patterns are poor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>B-complex vitamins, Magnesium, Electrolyte sachets</b> – Available at most pharmacies.</li> <li>❑ <b>Ensure or Fortisip drinks</b> – Can be recommended if undernourished, though usually on prescription.</li> </ul>

**PLEASE NOTE:** This document is intended for informational and guidance purposes only and does not constitute clinical or medical advice. It is designed to support professionals in understanding potential symptomatic relief options for individuals experiencing harms related to ketamine use, particularly in the context of delayed access to specialist services. It is not a substitute for clinical judgement or formal medical guidelines. All prescribing decisions must be made by a qualified healthcare professional following a full clinical assessment and in accordance with current UK prescribing frameworks, local policies, and relevant NICE or MHRA guidance. Over-the-counter products and herbal remedies should be used with caution, and individuals should be encouraged to consult with a GP or pharmacist before beginning any new treatment, especially if they are taking other medications or have underlying health conditions. This guidance does not endorse the use of ketamine outside of licensed medical settings and is intended to reduce harm and support people until appropriate care can be accessed.