



# PAINWEST

## Excellence in Pain Management

### Therapeutic infusion - Ketamine

#### What is Ketamine?

Ketamine is a commonly used anaesthetic medication (used in both medical and veterinary practice). At low doses (1/5th to 1/20th of doses that will cause you to be anaesthetized), it can have a strong pain relief action. Ketamine does this by dampening down the signals that nerves carry, and at high doses causes general anaesthesia.

#### Why is Ketamine used as an infusion for pain management?

For difficult-to-treat pain issues where at least a part of the pain may be coming from the nerves, spinal cord or the brain (neuropathic pain), bursts of intermittent Ketamine, infused intravenously (through the drip) may have a lasting dampening effect on the nerves, thereby reducing the pain level. This may also allow your usual pain medications to work better for a period of time. It can give you a “window of opportunity” to improve your function.



#### What do I need to know about Ketamine infusion?

1. Ketamine can sometimes provoke hallucination (seeing things that aren't there), dysphoria (feeling of badness, doom, “not right”), anxiety and nausea. To reduce the unpleasant feelings, we will often give you a small dose of sedative and anti-nausea medication prior to starting the infusion. If you suffer from psychoses, Ketamine may not be suitable for you. Please discuss this with your doctor. **However, intermittent infusions of Ketamine for pain relief rarely causes people to become addicted or suffer long term issues**
2. Ketamine may increase your heart rate and blood pressure, although such effects are only seen at high doses. We will monitor these throughout infusion to keep you safe.

#### What can I expect?

Before the infusion, it is safest for you to come on an empty stomach. We will ask you to not eat or drink from midnight the night before infusion, with the exception of usual medications. Ketamine generally does not interact with other medications and they can be taken with a small sip of water.

On the day, you will present to the private hospital for a short day admission. We will keep you comfortable in bed, and monitor your oxygen level, blood pressure and heart rate. We may give you extra oxygen through a mask. We will run an infusion of Ketamine by itself, or combined with another medication, over the period of 2-3 hours. The rate at which the infusion is run can be changed depending on your reaction (e.g. it can be slowed down if you are having a strong reaction).

Once the infusion finishes, we may monitor you for slightly longer before allowing you to return home. As Ketamine has an effect on your brain, you cannot drive, operate heavy machinery, make important decisions or sign legal documents for 24 hours.

Ketamine infusion is often given in a burst (e.g. every 1-2 weeks for 2-6 treatments) for maximal effect. Given this way, we may expect pain relief lasting for weeks to several months. You may not feel an effect immediately, and it can often take several infusions for the effect to become noticeable.

Occasionally we may consider admitting you to hospital for 5 days to run the infusion continuously.

***Please ask us if you have any questions or concerns about this treatment.***