Reducing the harms of ketamine

The use of any drug is associated with risk, but you can reduce the risks of using ketamine by being aware of them and taking measures to minimise their impact.

- Measure the dose carefully and start with a small test dose.
- Measure the intervals between doses accurately.
- Do not use ketamine with other drugs, including alcohol or stimulants.
- Take measures to reduce the risk of accidental injury; ketamine has 'dissociative' and anaesthetic topical (local) effects, which can put you at risk of accidents. As such:
  - avoid swimming, even in shallow water because of the risk of drowning
  - do not have a bath or shower because of the risk of scolding and severe burns from hot water
  - avoid outdoor settings in cold weather to avoid the risk of hypothermia, and in hot weather to avoid dehydration and sunburn
  - avoid using ketamine with any sexual activity that risks tissue damage (e.g. ‘fisting’)
  - ensure that intoxicated friends are always accompanied by others who are not.
- Do not use ketamine if you have heart problems.
- Do not use ketamine if you have mental health problems or are depressed.
Ketamine

Do not use ketamine, especially frequently:

- because you will develop tolerance, which means that you need increasingly higher doses to achieve the same effects; monitor your intake to make sure that you are not using more than you intend – diaries and electronic tools can be very useful in monitoring dose and frequency of use

- to avoid bladder and urinary tract problems, which can be very severe; signs of bladder damage include cystitis, frequent urination, blood in urine and pain, again which can be severe (if you already suffer from a bladder problem, stop using, even if you think ketamine helps with the pain – it will only make the pain worse)

- to avoid stomach cramps, known as the ‘K-cramps’, and kidney problems

- as it can lead to memory problems

- because of its effects on the brain (neurological and cognitive changes), which can result in poor performance at school, college or work.