

# Sexual Assault Information

## 1. Date Rape Drugs

### What are date rape drugs?

These are drugs that are sometimes used to assist a sexual assault. Sexual assault is any type of sexual activity that a person does not agree to. Because of the effects of these drugs, victims may be physically helpless, unable to refuse sex, and can't remember what happened. The drugs often have no color, smell, or taste and are easily added to flavored drinks without the victim's knowledge. There are at least three date rape drugs:

- GHB (gamma hydroxybutyric acid)
- Rohypnol (flunitrazepam)
- Ketamine (ketamine hydrochloride)

Although we use the term "date rape," most experts prefer the term "drug-facilitated sexual assault." These drugs have been used to help people commit other crimes, like robbery and physical assault, and have been used on both men and women.

### What do the drugs look like?

- GHB has a few forms: a liquid with no odor or color, white powder and pill.
- Rohypnol is a pill and dissolves in liquids. New pills turn blue when added to liquids. However, the old pills, with no color, are still available.
- Ketamine is a white powder.

### What effects do these drugs have on the body?

The drugs can affect you quickly. The length of time that the effects last varies. It depends on how much of the drug is taken and if the drug is mixed with other substances, like alcohol. Alcohol can worsen the drug's effects and can cause more health problems.

Despite being illegal, GHB is relatively easy to make, with recipes available on the Internet, and is produced domestically in America and smuggled in from other countries. It's well-known as a club drug among teens and young adults, since it also can make the user feel euphoric and intoxicated. It's sometimes referred to as liquid ecstasy, Georgia home boy, and cherry meth. According to 2002 statistics from the Department of Justice, 1.5 percent of high school seniors reported using the drug recreationally during the past year.

GHB also is a common drug in sexual assaults for several reasons. It's colorless and odorless and comes in powder or liquid forms, which makes it easy to mix in water, punch and alcoholic drinks. It also acts quickly. Within 15 minutes of drinking it, you become sleepy and lose the ability to control your muscles—making you vulnerable to an attacker.

This drug also often causes a type of memory loss called anterograde amnesia, which means you don't remember anything that happened during the time the drug was affecting you. These effects are even stronger when GHB is mixed with alcohol.

### Specific Effects of the Drugs

#### GHB

- GHB can cause nausea, vomiting, delusions, impaired judgment, depression, vertigo, visual disturbances, seizures, respiratory distress, reduced inhibition, increased sensitivity to touch, immobilization, loss of consciousness, amnesia, coma, and death. These effects can take place within fifteen minutes and can last up to three hours.
- GHB produces intoxication followed by deep sedation.
- When combined with alcohol or other drugs, the potential for deadly overdoses escalates rapidly.
- Periods of impaired memory may occur. This may cause the victim to be unable to remember the details of what happened while they were under the influence of these drugs.
- Generally, GHB can be detected in the urine for up to eight, and sometimes twelve, hours after ingestion.

#### Rohypnol

- Rohypnol can cause impaired judgment, disinhibition, dizziness, confusion, disproportionate inebriation in relation to the amount of alcohol consumed, slurred speech, and trouble with motor coordination; Rohypnol can also produce complete or partial amnesia, respiratory depression, and low blood pressure.
- Persons who have ingested Rohypnol or GHB may have sudden and unexplained drowsiness and difficulty with motor coordination.
- Once ingested, Rohypnol will begin to take effect in fifteen minutes to an hour and will last eight to ten hours.
- Generally, Rohypnol can be detected in the urine for up to seventy-two hours after ingestion.

#### Ketamine

- Ketamine can produce hallucinations, impaired judgment and perception, paranoia, and dissociative state in which the user feels as if the mind is "separated" from the body.
- Can produce a comatose state for the user, and in certain situations, death.
- Blocks feelings of pain.
- Can cause respiratory depression but not center nervous system depression.
- Effects can be similar to PCP, including numbness, loss of coordination, sense of invulnerability, muscle rigidity, aggressive/violent behavior, slurred or blocked speech, exaggerated sense of strength, and blank stares. Large doses can produce vomiting and convulsions, and may lead to oxygen starvation of the brain and muscles.

- Effects generally last an hour but can last up to four to six hours. Generally, it takes twenty-four to forty-eight hours before the user feels “normal” again.
- Generally, Ketamine can be detected in the urine for up to forty-eight hours after ingestion.

## **2. Protecting Yourself**

- Always keep your beverage with you.
- Make sure anything you drink is from an unopened container, e.g., a bottle, can, etc.
- Always go to parties with friends and establish beforehand that you will watch each other’s drinks and behavior.
- Be aware of your friends’ behavior. If their behavior changes, they may have unknowingly ingested a sedating drug. Get medical assistance.
- If you start to feel dizziness, nausea, or any of the symptoms these drugs produce, tell a friend and have them seek immediate medical attention for you.

## **3. If You or a Friend Are Sexually Assaulted**

If you have reason to believe you or a friend have been sexually assaulted, take these steps:

1. Immediately get to a safe location and call a rape crisis center and/or the police. The toll-free rape crisis center (National Sexual Assault Hotline) number is 1-800-656-4673. The Rape Crisis Center of Marin number is 415-259-2850.
2. You should not take a shower, bathe, douche, change clothes, or straighten up the area where the assault occurred until the medical and legal evidence has been collected. Avoid urination if possible.
3. Regardless of whether you decide to make a police report, you should go to a hospital, clinic, or private doctor for treatment of any external and/or internal injuries, tests for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, and support services. Only a hospital can collect evidence for a trial.
4. While being medically examined, request a test for the presence of Rohypnol, GHB, Ketamine, and other sedating drugs. This test is not part of the regular evidence collection procedure and should be done as quickly as possible—every hour counts. The chances of detecting the drug in your system are best when the sample is obtained soon after the substance has been ingested. This test is optional and will be given only at the request of the victim. In addition, the victim has forty-eight hours to sign the release for the toxicology screen.

5. If you cannot get to the hospital immediately or suspect several hours have already passed, you may collect your own urine sample in a clean container, refrigerate it until you leave, and take the sample with you.

What to do if you think you've been sexually assaulted

If you think you may have been drugged and victimized, don't wait to seek help, and keep this in mind:

***Seek help from the police or a hospital as soon as possible.*** Tell the authorities that you think you may have been drugged. The sooner you report the incident, the more likely that laboratory tests of your urine may show evidence of any drugs. After 96 hours, such tests may be virtually useless because the drugs have passed from your system.

This information has been adapted from *Averting The Campus Date Rape Drug Crisis, Seven Solutions for Colleges, Law Enforcement and Medical Professionals*, the Final Report of the Emergency Campus Summit on Date Rape Drugs, 1999 Campus Safety Summit Edition under the auspices of Illinois Attorney General Jim Ryan.