

Date Rape Drugs

Date Rape drugs are sometimes used to assist a sexual assault. Sexual assault is any type of sexual activity that a person does not agree to. It can include inappropriate touching, vaginal penetration, sexual intercourse, rape, and attempted rape. 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.

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. It can include inappropriate touching, vaginal penetration, sexual intercourse, rape, and attempted rape. 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. Also, one drug — GHB — can be made by people in their homes, so you don't know what's in it.

GHB

GHB can cause these problems:

- relaxation
- drowsiness
- dizziness
- nausea
- problems seeing
- unconsciousness (black out)
- seizures
- can't remember what happened while drugged
- problems breathing
- tremors
- sweating
- vomiting
- slow heart rate
- dream-like feeling
- coma
- death

Rohypnol

Rohypnol can cause these problems:

- can't remember what happened while drugged
- lower blood pressure
- sleepiness
- muscle relaxation or loss of muscle control
- drunk feeling
- nausea
- problems talking
- difficulty with motor movements
- loss of consciousness
- confusion

- problems seeing
- dizziness
- confusion
- stomach problems

Ketamine

Ketamine can cause these problems:

- hallucinations
- lost sense of time and identity
- distorted perceptions of sight and sound
- feeling out of control
- impaired motor function
- problems breathing
- convulsions
- vomiting
- out of body experiences
- memory problems
- dream-like feeling
- numbness
- loss of coordination
- aggressive or violent behavior
- slurred speech

Are these drugs legal in the United States?

Some of these drugs are legal, but that doesn't mean they're not going to hurt you. Even if they're legal, you should not use them unless your health care provider prescribes them.

- Rohypnol is NOT legal in the U.S. It is legal in Europe and Mexico and prescribed for sleep problems and as an anesthetic (medicine given during surgery so you don't feel pain). It is brought into the U.S. illegally.

- Ketamine is legal in the U.S. for use as an anesthetic for humans and animals. It is mostly used on animals. Veterinary clinics are robbed for their Ketamine supply.

- GHB was recently made legal in the U.S to treat problems from narcolepsy (a sleep problem).

Is alcohol a date rape drug?

While GHB, rohypnol, and ketamine are considered "date rape drugs," there are other drugs that affect judgment and behavior, and can put a person at risk for unwanted or risky sexual activity. Alcohol is one of those drugs. When a person is drinking alcohol:

- It's harder to think clearly and evaluate a potentially dangerous situation.
- It's harder to resist sexual or physical assault.
- Drinking too much alcohol can also cause black-outs and memory loss.

But remember: even if a victim of sexual assault drank alcohol, she is NOT at fault for being assaulted.

How can I protect myself from being a victim?

- Don't accept drinks from other people.
- Open containers yourself.
- Keep your drink with you at all times, even when you go to the bathroom.
- Don't share drinks.
- Don't drink from punch bowls or other large, common, open containers. They may already have drugs in them.
- Don't drink anything that tastes or smells strange. Sometimes, GHB tastes salty.
- Have a non-drinking friend with you to make sure nothing happens.
- If you think that you have been drugged and raped:
 - Go to the police station or hospital right away.
 - Get a urine (pee) test as soon as possible. The drugs leave your system quickly. Rohypnol leaves your body 72 hours after you take it. GHB leaves the body in 12 hours.
 - Don't urinate before getting help.
 - Don't douche, bathe, or change clothes before getting help. These things may give evidence of the rape.
- You also can call a crisis center or a hotline to talk with a counselor. One national hotline is the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-SAFE or 800-787-3224 (TDD). Feelings of shame, guilt, fear and shock are normal. It is important to get counseling from a trusted professional.

{glossar}

Source: The National Women's Health Information Center (Office on Women's Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

Toll Free: 888-9NO-DRUGS or 888-966-3784