

Date-Rape Drugs

When consumed, date-rape drugs can cause sedation and amnesia, as well as impaired judgement, decreased inhibition, dizziness, confusion, and a loss of motor control. Consequently, an individual who is suffering from the effects of a date-rape drug cannot legally consent to sexual activity, and may be unable to resist (or to even be aware of) a sexual assault. A person's reaction to a particular date-rape drug depends on:

- the type of drug, and amount consumed;
- the individual's age;
- the individual's size;
- pre-existing medical conditions;
- concurrent or recent alcohol intake;
- how the drug is administered.

Common Date-Rape Drugs and Their Effects:

Alcohol: This is, by far, the most common date-rape drug. It is so easy to use because it is both legal and socially acceptable.

Alcohol is a depressant, and slows the activity of the central nervous system. Consuming alcohol (especially in excess) can affect judgement and behaviour, and put a person at risk for unwanted or risky sexual activity. In addition, perpetrators have been known to use their own consumption of alcohol as an excuse for committing sexual assault.



Photo Source: Partnership for a Drug-Free America (2008)

It is important to remember that when drinking alcohol: thinking clearly is usually more challenging (which may decrease one's ability to recognize and deal effectively with an unsafe situation); resisting sexual or physical assault is more difficult; and, black-outs and/or memory loss can occur.

GHB (Gamma-hydroxybutyrate): This drug can be easily dissolved in beverages, and is available: in capsules; as an odourless and colourless liquid, in containers similar in size and shape to hotel shampoo bottles; in tablet form; and, as a white powder (as shown).



Photo Source: Partnership for a Drug-Free America (2008)

Common names for *GHB* include “G”, “Liquid Ecstasy”, “Liquid X”, and “Grievous Bodily Harm”. *GHB* is a central nervous system depressant that can slow breathing and heart rates. Some other effects include decreased inhibition, drowsiness, dizziness, vomiting, deep sleep, respiratory distress, amnesia, convulsions, and even death.

Rohypnol: This drug is manufactured as small, white tablets with “Roche” inscribed on the side, and an encircled “1” or “2” (as shown below) that indicates a 1-mg or a 2-mg dose, respectively. *Rohypnol* dissolves readily in liquids. Newer versions of the drug may turn some beverages cloudy or bright blue.



Photo Source: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2001)

Common names for this drug include “Rope”, “Roofies”, “Roachies”, and “The Forget Pill”. *Rohypnol* produces profound sedative effects, especially when combined with alcohol. Other effects include reduced inhibition, confusion, impaired judgement, dizziness, staggering, slurred speech, and blackouts (which may cause short-term memory loss).

Ketamine: This drug is used primarily as a veterinary anesthetic. It is manufactured in a liquid form (as shown below), and can be added to beverages or injected. The liquid can be converted into a white powder, which is snorted, ingested, or smoked.



Photo Source: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2001)

Common names for this drug include “K”, “Special K”, and “Vitamin K”. *Ketamine* can cause intoxication and memory loss. Other effects include anxiety, dizziness, numbness, confusion, “out-of-body” experiences, visual distortions, hallucinations, and flashbacks.

Ecstasy (MDMA): This drug is typically found in a tablet or capsule form that is swallowed or added to beverages. *Ecstasy* is also available as a powder that can be snorted, and (in rare instances) the drug may be injected. Tablets exist in different shapes, sizes, and colours, and are often stamped with a logo (as shown).



Photo Source: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2001)

Common names for this drug are “E”, “XTC”, and “The Love Drug”. Enjoyable effects of *Ecstasy* (usually at lower doses) include feelings of pleasure and well being, greater confidence, and sociability. Some negative effects (usually at higher doses) include increased blood pressure and heart rate, anxiety, seizures, heart failure and strokes, and sometimes death. After-effects such as confusion, paranoia, depression, and memory loss may also be experienced.

Other Date-Rape Drugs

Other substances that may be used as date-rape drugs include, but are not limited to: *herbal ecstasy*; *LSD* or “acid”; prescription medications; marijuana; cocaine; and, heroin.

Protecting Yourself from Date-Rape Drugs

The use of date-rape drugs can occur in a wide variety of social settings (e.g., at house parties and weddings; in restaurants and bars). There is also a greater likelihood that a date-rape drug will be used by someone known to the victim. In addition, date-rape drugs can be added to alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages (and food). The following tips will help to increase your safety with respect to date-rape drugs:

- DO NOT accept opened drinks from anyone. Accept only unopened drinks, and then open them yourself.
- Avoid consuming a mixed drink that has been prepared by another person. At bars, accept mixed drinks only from the bartender or server.
- Keep your drink with you at all times – even when you go to the bathroom. If you haven't been watching your drink for some reason, get a fresh one.
- If you are in a conversation where you may become distracted, place your hand over your drink.
- Never share drinks with anyone. Although someone may be a trusted friend, s/he may not watch the drink closely enough to prevent another person from adding a date-rape drug to it.
- If a drink tastes, looks, or smells unusual in any way, stop drinking it at once. Inform the event host (or another responsible person) about the situation.
- Don't take drinks from punch bowls or other shared beverage sources.
- Observe the behaviour of your friends, and ask them to watch out for you. Anyone who seems intoxicated after drinking only a small amount of alcohol, for example, may have been drugged.
- If you suspect that you, or one of your friends, has consumed a drink containing a date-rape drug, stop drinking it and seek medical attention immediately. If possible, keep the beverage so that it can be tested.
- If you are drinking alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation so that you can think clearly and act wisely. This is one of the best methods of protecting yourself from a dangerous situation.