

Drug and Alcohol Facilitated Sexual Assault – Fact Sheet

What is drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault?

This happens when a perpetrator purposely drugs his victim with the intention of decreasing their physical and mental defenses so that victims cannot resist or may not be aware of being sexually assaulted.

What kind of drugs are used to facilitate sexual assault? What should I know?

Alcohol	Alcohol depresses the central nervous system, which is indicated by such things as lowered inhibitions, disturbed motor skills, slurred speech and blurred vision. A large intake of alcohol over a very short period of time can result in a temporary coma or in alcohol poisoning. It is by far the most prevalent date rape drug because it is easy to use, readily available, legal and socially acceptable.
Cannabis Marijuana Pot Hash	Cannabis is the second most common drug found in drug-facilitated sexual assault victims. Marijuana is a commonly used recreational drug. While it does not have the incapacitating or memory loss effects of the “date-rape” drugs, it lowers inhibitions and reduces good judgment.
Flunitrazepam (Rohypnol)	Rohypnol is a potent drug that produces a sedative effect lasting up to 8 hours. It is often combined with alcohol, marijuana or cocaine to produce a rapid and dramatic high. After consuming the drug, it takes between 20 and 30 minutes before it takes effect. It can also blur a victim’s memory for hours after taken. Especially when mixed with alcohol, it can cause severe intoxication, respiratory depression and even death. If dissolved in a drink, it is odourless and tasteless, but may colour the liquid blue or murky because of a special new dye.
Gammahydroxybutyrate GHB G Liquid X	Gamma-hydroxybutyrate is a fairly common drug. It is used by weightlifters to enhance muscle growth. Some recreational drug users take it with other drugs, and some individuals use it for its “aphrodisiac” side effects (lowered inhibitions and heightened sense of touch). It is usually a colourless liquid—it looks just like water—and can easily be poured into a drink. It will taste slightly soapy or bitter. GHB takes between 15 and 20 minutes to have effect and can last a couple of hours. High doses can lead to vomiting, respiratory depression and even death. It is especially dangerous when mixed with alcohol. It disappears from the body fairly quickly and may be undetectable only 12 hours after ingestion.
Ketamine K Special K	Ketamine is still legally used by veterinarians as an anesthetic in animal surgery. It can make a person feel “numb” or pass out. It can also induce a “trance-like” state in which a victim may have no idea what is going on around them. It may also cause hallucinations. Unlike GHB and Rohypnol, someone doped with Ketamine will probably not be mistaken for someone who is just really drunk. It tastes very bad, so is easier to notice in a drink.

How common is drug and alcohol use in sexual assaults?

Drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault is fairly common, in fact about **25%** of the 1400 women who contact the Canadian Sexual Assault Centres each year report that drugs were a factor in a rape.¹ For young adults **almost half of the sexual assaults** take place under the influence of alcohol.² Additionally, approximately **one-half of all sexual assaults are committed by men who have been drinking alcohol.**³

Remember,
someone who is
intoxicated
cannot give their
consent.

Facts and Myths:

Drug-facilitated sexual assault happens in many places besides bars. It occurs in people’s homes, at restaurants, at house parties, and while camping. Second, it is more common for a friend, partner or acquaintance than a stranger to use drugs on someone. These do’s and don’ts which include watching your drink at bars, not leaving it unattended or if you do order a new drink place the responsibility for stopping this crime on the victims. The drug companies who make Rohypnol have recently added a blue dye to into their pill, so if dropped into a drink it will turn the drink blue. **Survivors should never feel as though they were responsible for their sexual assault. The responsibility should be placed exactly where it belongs: on those who administer the drug.**⁴

When it Happens...

Someone who has experienced a drug-facilitated sexual assault is likely to be very **confused and disoriented**—indeed, not even certain if she was sexually assaulted—she may not seek any form of help, much less report the assault. The loss of memory often experienced can make recovery more difficult because part of the recovery process involves remembering, working through memories and taking back control.

The first step is simply recognizing that it has happened. With little or no memory of a sexual assault, the survivor needs to piece together a variety of indications, including:

- waking up in different surroundings and not knowing how she got there
- waking up with clothes that are missing, put on differently, torn or stained
- loss of memory for part of the evening or day
- a sense that something is “not right”
- sore muscles
- physical marks, scrapes, bruises
- soreness in the genital or anal areas, or the breasts
- abnormal discharge

Any of these indications should be taken seriously. If there is any suspicion that a sexual assault could have taken place, it is important to get medical attention and be tested for sexually transmitted infections and/or pregnancy. It may also be possible to ascertain if a drug was used if testing is done quickly.

¹ Gorin T. A rape crisis centre view of Rohypnol: how the hype tricks raped women. Vancouver: Canadian Association of Sexual Assault

² The Survey of Unwanted Sexual Experiences Among University of Alberta Students, 2001.

³ Antonia Abbey et al. Alcohol Research & Health, Vol. 25, 2001, [Alcohol and Sexual Assault](#).

⁴ University of Alberta, [Sexual Assault Fact Sheet](#), 2009

