

What is GHB

GHB along with Ecstasy has become a popular drug among those who frequent the rave dance scene. GHB has also been associated with the so called "date rape" drugs. GHB is available as a clear, slightly salty tasting liquid or white powder.

Gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB)

Slang or Street Names: Grievous Bodily Harm, G, Liquid Ecstasy, Georgia Home Boy

GHB can be produced in clear liquid, white powder, tablet, and capsule forms, and it is often used in combination with alcohol, making it even more dangerous. GHB has been increasingly involved in poisonings, overdoses, "date rapes," and fatalities. The drug is used predominantly by adolescents and young adults, often when they attend nightclubs and raves. GHB is often manufactured in homes with recipes and ingredients found and purchased on the Internet.

GHB is usually abused either for its intoxicating/sedative/euphoriant properties or for its growth hormone-releasing effects, which can build muscles.

Some individuals are synthesizing GHB in home laboratories. Ingredients in GHB, gamma-butyrolactone (GBL) and 1,4-butanediol, can also be converted by the body into GHB. These ingredients are found in a number of dietary supplements available in health food stores and gymnasiums to induce sleep, build muscles, and enhance sexual performance.

GHB is a central nervous system depressant that can relax or sedate the body. At higher doses it can slow breathing and heart rate to dangerous levels. GHB's intoxicating effects begin 10 to 20 minutes after the drug is taken. The effects typically last up to 4 hours, depending on the dosage. At lower doses, GHB can relieve anxiety and produce relaxation; however, as the dose increases, the sedative effects may result in sleep and eventual coma or death.

Overdose of GHB can occur rather quickly, and the signs are similar to those of other sedatives: drowsiness, nausea, vomiting, headache, loss of consciousness, loss of reflexes, impaired breathing, and ultimately death.

GHB is cleared from the body relatively quickly, so it is sometimes difficult to detect in emergency rooms and other treatment facilities.

What is Rohypnol?

Rohypnol (pronounced row-hip-nole) is not legally available in the United States, even for medicinal purposes, but it is an approved medicine in most other parts of the world, prescribed mainly for the short-term treatment of sleep disorders. Rohypnol is a tranquilizer like Valium, yet is 10 times more potent. The drug produces sedative effects, including amnesia, muscle relaxation, and the slowing of psychomotor performance. Sedation occurs 20 to 30 minutes after administration of a 2-mg tablet and lasts for approximately 8 hours.

Illicit use of Rohypnol originated in Europe in the 1970s and has increased worldwide since then. However, the substance did not appear in the United States until the early 1990s. In 1992, a South Florida hotline began receiving calls reporting occasional to chronic abuse of the drug. Around the same time, the drug appeared in Texas as well. Today, use of Rohypnol is one of the fastest growing drug problems in both areas. In addition, the drug appears to be spreading across the United States. As of April 1995, the

Drug Enforcement Administration had documented over 1,000 cases of Rohypnol possession across 13 states.

Rohypnol use by youths of all socioeconomic status has been reported. The inexpensive cost, ranging from \$2 to \$3 per pill, attracts young users. High school students report use of the drug as a cheap drunk and as a cure for alcohol hangovers. Typically, however, Rohypnol is used along with alcohol and other drugs. College students using Rohypnol report mixing it with beer to enhance the feeling of drunkenness. It has also been reported to be used in combination with marijuana and cocaine, as well as heroin. Rohypnol use appears to be spreading in the United States among high school and college youth. In some areas, it is associated with gangs, and it is becoming known as a club drug.

The use of Rohypnol itself is dangerous, leading to physical and psychological dependence, which increases with dose and duration of use. However, there are other dangers linked to the use of this substance. Rohypnol is typically sold in its original bubble packaging, conveying a sense of legality and security in its use. The perceived safety of the drug along with the trend of use in combination with other substances, creates the possibility of Rohypnol becoming a gateway to harder drugs. An equally serious danger is the reported use of Rohypnol as a "date rape" drug of choice. While this specific use may not be pervasive, it is cause for concern.

Lethal overdose is unlikely; however, continued use will result in physical dependence. Withdrawal symptoms range from headache, muscle pain, and confusion to hallucinations and convulsions. Seizures may occur a week or more after cessation of use. Thus, medically supervised detoxification using diminishing doses of other benzodiazepines is essential.

Nicknames for Rohypnol

Street names for Rohypnol include rophies, ropies, ruffies, roofies, la rocha, roofenol, roche, R2, mexican valium, rib, and rope.