

# Sexual Assault

## DRUGGED AND ASSAULTED 1

### WHAT DRUGS ARE USED?

**A**ny drug, including alcohol, can be used as a means to make a person vulnerable to assault in much the same way as a weapon can be used.

### THE ROLE OF ALCOHOL

Alcohol has been used for a long time to increase a person's vulnerability to sexual assault. In our community, alcohol is also the most commonly used drug. Increasing the alcohol content of someone's drink or simply encouraging the person to drink heavily are ways in which alcohol has been used as a means to assist sexual assault.

### OTHER DRUGS

Sleeping tablets and those drugs prescribed to control anxiety have also been used. These drugs are usually in the family of medications called 'benzodiazepines' or 'benzos'. They include Valium and Serepax. One drug in this group is flunitrazepam which is commonly known as Rohypnol (or rohies) or Hypnodorm. This drug has been nicknamed "easy lay" in the United States where it is acknowledged as a "date rape drug". The drug has a greater effect than Valium. It appears that some of the hallucinogens such as ecstasy have also been used to drug people before they have been sexually assaulted.

Another drug, Gammahydroxybutyrate, which is a sedative, has also been used. Usually known by the initials "GHB" these initials are sometimes turned around to "GBH" (also an abbreviation for "grievous bodily harm" which is often the street name for this drug). Opiates such as heroin (which converts to morphine once in the body) have also been found in blood from people who have been assaulted. Often victims have been given a combination or "cocktail" of drugs such as alcohol and a benzodiazepine.

### HOW ARE THE DRUGS ADMINISTERED?

#### **W**illing use of a drug prior to the assault

Some people have been sexually assaulted after they have knowingly used a drug, such as the person who has drunk alcohol with an acquaintance who later assaults them. Others have knowingly taken a drug with someone else and then found that the drug is not what they were told or has greater effect than they were expecting. The drug can be given to them by an acquaintance or a stranger.



Of course willingly using a legal or illegal drug with someone does not give that other person permission to sexually assault you. And the fact that because you are intoxicated and cannot say "NO" does not mean you are saying "YES"!

### **People who do not know they have been given a drug**

Prior to being sexually assaulted some people have been drugged without their knowledge. The most frequent way in which people report this occurring is that the drug is slipped into an alcoholic drink or even tea or coffee. People who have been drugged like this usually report that they suspected nothing and were not aware that the drug had been put in their drink. The amount of the drug used is small and the taste of the drug is usually masked by the taste of the drink. One of the benzodiazepines, Rohypnol, has the potential to be used in this way. As a result the manufacturers have added a strong blue dye to the tablets so they will now show up if added to a drink.

### **WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF THE DRUGS?**

The effect of a drug on a person depends on a number of things including the size of the person or the amount or combination of the drugs used.

If the drug is alcohol, one of the benzodiazepines, an opiate, or a combination of these, the drugged person usually appears as if they were drunk. These drugs can cause the person to not think clearly and be easily manipulated so that they can agree to things that they would normally avoid or consider unsafe. This group of drugs can interfere with one's decision making so a person can behave quite "out of character". For example they may leave a bar with someone they don't know or engage in unsafe sexual behaviour with a stranger, even though they would not normally do this.

When a benzodiazepine or alcohol has been used to drug someone it is not unusual for that person to have an unclear memory around the assault or even to have no memory of the event at all. If a sufficiently large dose of the drug has been used or is combined with a moderate amount of alcohol, unconsciousness can follow.

Someone who has been given one of the hallucinogens, such as LSD or ecstasy may appear confused, frightened and not know what is going on.

Again, depending on the drug, the effects may last for hours or days. Some will also result in hangover-like feelings.

In addition to being sexually assaulted, many people can also be robbed while they are in this vulnerable state.