

Rohypnol and GHB

Rohypnol and GHB are predominantly central nervous system depressants. Because they are often colorless, tasteless, and odorless, they can be added to beverages and ingested unknowingly.

These substances emerged a few years ago as "drug-assisted assault" drugs. Because of concern about their abuse, Congress passed the "Drug-Induced Rape Prevention and Punishment Act of 1996" in October 1996. This legislation increased Federal penalties for use of any controlled substance to aid in sexual assault.

Rohypnol

Rohypnol, a trade name for flunitrazepam, belongs to a class of drugs known as benzodiazepines. Rohypnol can incapacitate victims and prevent them from resisting sexual assault. It can produce "anterograde amnesia," which means individuals may not remember events they experienced while under the effects of the drug. Also, Rohypnol may be lethal when mixed with alcohol and/or other depressants.

Rohypnol is not approved for use in the United States, and its importation is banned. Illicit abuse of Rohypnol started appearing in the United States in the early 1990s, where it became known as "rophies," "roofies," "roach," and "rope."

Abuse of two other similar drugs appears to have replaced Rohypnol abuse in some regions of the country. These are clonazepam, marketed in the U.S. as Klonopin and in Mexico as Rivotril, and alprazolam, marketed as Xanax.

GHB

Since about 1990, GHB (gamma hydroxybutyrate) has been used in the U.S. for its euphoric, sedative, and anabolic (body building) effects. It is a central nervous system depressant that was widely available over-the-counter in health food stores during the 1980s and until 1992. It was purchased largely by body builders to aid in fat reduction and muscle building. Street names include "liquid ecstasy," "soap," "easy lay," "vita-G," and "Georgia home boy."

Coma and seizures can occur following abuse of GHB. Combining abuse of GHB with other drugs such as alcohol can result in nausea and breathing difficulties. GHB may also produce withdrawal effects, including insomnia, anxiety, tremors, and sweating. GHB and two of its precursors, gamma butyrolactone (GBL) and butanediol (BD), have been involved in poisonings, overdoses, date rapes, and deaths.

Adapted from the [National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\)](http://www.drugscreening.org/ghb.aspx)
<http://www.drugscreening.org/ghb.aspx>
U.S. Department of Health and Human Service