

# Club Drugs

“Club drug” is a vague term that refers to a wide variety of drugs. Uncertainties about drug sources, pharmacological agents, chemicals used to manufacture them, and possible contaminants make it difficult to determine toxicity, consequences, and symptoms that might be expected in a particular community. The information in this alert will be useful in any situation. No club drug is benign. Chronic abuse of MDMA, for example, appears to produce long-term damage to serotonin-containing neurons in the brain. Given the important role that the neurotransmitter serotonin plays in regulating emotion, memory, sleep, pain, and higher order cognitive processes, it is likely that MDMA use can cause a variety of behavioral and cognitive consequences as well as impair memory.

Because some club drugs are colorless, tasteless, and odorless, they can be added unobtrusively to beverages by individuals who want to intoxicate or sedate others. In recent years, there has been an increase in reports of club drugs used to commit sexual assaults.

What follows is an overview of the scientific data we have on several of the most prevalent club drugs. Because many of these drug-use trends are still emerging, some of the data presented here are preliminary. Toward this end, we have established a link to provide scientific information about club drugs.

## Some Facts About Club Drugs

### **Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)**

**Slang or Street Names: Ecstasy, Molly, XTC, X, Adam, Clarity, Lover’s Speed**  
MDMA was developed and patented in the early 1900’s as a chemical precursor in the synthesis of pharmaceuticals. Chemically, MDMA is similar to the stimulant amphetamine and the hallucinogen mescaline. MDMA can produce both stimulant and psychedelic effects.

Methylenedioxyamphetamine (MDA) and methylenedioxyethylamphetamine (MDEA) are drugs chemically similar to MDMA. MDMA is taken orally, usually in a tablet or a capsule. MDMA’s effects last approximately three to six hours, though confusion, depression, sleep

problems, anxiety, and paranoia have been reported to occur even weeks after the drug is taken. MDMA can produce a significant increase in heart rate and blood pressure and a sense of alertness like that associated with amphetamine use.

The stimulant effects of MDMA, which enable users to dance for extended periods, may also lead to dehydration, hypertension, and heart or kidney failure. MDMA can be extremely dangerous in high doses. It can cause a marked increase in body temperature (malignant hyperthermia), leading to the muscle breakdown and kidney and cardiovascular system failure reported in some fatal cases at raves. MDMA use may also lead to heart attacks, strokes, and seizures in some users.

MDMA is neurotoxic. Chronic use of MDMA was found, first in laboratory animals and more recently in humans, to produce long-lasting, perhaps permanent, damage to the neurons that release serotonin, and consequent memory impairment.

\*MDMA use has been reported across the country: Cities in which MDMA use has been reported include Chicago, Denver, Miami, Atlanta, New Orleans, San Francisco, Austin, Seattle, Boston, Detroit, New York, St. Louis, Dallas, and Washington, D.C

## **Rohypnol Fact Sheet**

**Street names for Rohypnol include: Roofies, Roche, Rope, Ruffies, R-2, Roaches, Rib, Forget-Me Pill, and Mexican Valium.**

Rohypnol® (flunitrazepam) is the brand name of a sleeping pill prescribed for insomnia in Mexico, South America, Europe, and Asia. It has NOT been approved for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration but this has not stopped its distribution in the United States. Rohypnol belongs to the family of medications called benzodiazepines which includes Valium®, Librium®, and Xanax®.

Rohypnol is being called the “Date Rape Drug” or the “Quaalude of the ’90s” because it is the newest drug to be abused by adding it to alcohol. When combined with alcohol, marijuana, cocaine or other drugs, it can provide a rapid and dramatic “high.” Even if used by itself, Rohypnol’s effects are very similar to intoxication.

### **What effects does it have on the body?**

Rohypnol has been prescribed as an effective sleeping pill and is also used as a sedative and preanesthetic medication in some countries. Rohypnol is tasteless and odorless, and it dissolves easily in carbonated beverages. Rohypnol is usually taken orally, although there are reports that it can be ground up and snorted. The effects of flunitrazepam are fairly long-acting. The sedative and toxic effects of Rohypnol are aggravated by concurrent use of alcohol. The drug’s effects begin within 30 minutes, peak within two hours, and may persist for up to eight hours or more, depending upon the dosage. A single dose of Rohypnol, as

small as 1 mg., can produce effects for 8-12 hours after ingestion. When combined with alcohol or other drugs, Rohypnol can impair judgment and motor skills and cause memory loss or blackouts (lasting 8 to 24 hours after ingestion). Loss of inhibition can also occur, with or without alcohol. A person under the influence of Rohypnol can appear to be drunk and uncoordinated, with bloodshot eyes and slurred speech. Sedation can occur as soon as 20 minutes after ingestion. The drug's effects will peak within two hours and may persist for up to eight hours or more, depending on the dosage. Other adverse effects associated with flunitrazepam include visual disturbances, drowsiness, confusion, decreased blood pressure, memory impairment, gastrointestinal disturbances, and urinary retention. When mixed with alcohol, Rohypnol may cause respiratory depression, aspiration, or even death. Although classified as a depressant, Rohypnol can rarely induce excitability or aggressive behavior. The drug can cause profound "anterograde amnesia"; that is, individuals may not remember events they experienced while under the effects of the drug. This may be why one of the street names for Rohypnol is "the Forget-Me Pill."

Reports of abuse on many college campuses include stories of women waking up naked in unfamiliar surroundings with no memory of the preceding hours. They may have been sexually assaulted without any memory of what took place. It is important to note that sexual assault or abuse of Rohypnol is not gender-biased. Although most cases are reported by females, this drug has the same effect on males. Both males and females have the right to seek treatment after sexual assault and/or suspected Rohypnol abuse.

## **What does Rohypnol look like?**

This drug is shipped in bubble packaging or blister packs that appear very similar to aspirin. The tablets are typically white in color, although counterfeit products have appeared in brownish-pink tint. Rohypnol tablets are single or cross-scored on one side with "ROCHE" and "1" or "2" encircled on the other. When dissolved in alcohol, soft drinks, water, or any other liquid, the drug is colorless, odorless, and tasteless (although some report that it has a slightly bitter taste when mixed with alcohol).

## **Is there a drug test for Rohypnol?**

YES. A urine test can detect the presence of Rohypnol up to 60 hours after ingestion. Rohypnol can be more difficult to detect than similar drugs because it is in low concentrations and is cleared quickly by the body.

## **Are there other drugs that are being abused like Rohypnol?**

YES. People have been "spiking" drinks for decades with legal or illegal substances. Although Rohypnol is getting the most recent attention, reports of GHB (Gamma Hydroxy Butyrate) have also been increasing. GHB is found naturally in the body but the synthetic product created in the 1980's was purchased by body builders (over-the-counter) as an anabolic steroid alternative. When combined with alcohol it results in an effect similar to

Rohypnol's. GHB is not approved for use in the U.S. and has been banned from over-the-counter sales by the FDA. It continues to be available in the underground market.

## How can I lower my risk?

- Watch your drink.
- Watch out for each other's drinks.
- Avoid punch bowls.
- Open your own bottle or container-don't accept opened drinks.
- Tell others about Rohypnol. Awareness is a major factor in this or any other kinds of abuse.
- Remember that Rohypnol is odorless, colorless, and tasteless, and can be added to ANY drink-even water.
- If you suspect you or a friend may have ingested Rohypnol, be sure to get tested at the hospital Emergency Room. The drug is detectable for up to 60 hours but cases should and can be reported at any time.
- Report any suspected abuse of Rohypnol to proper legal authorities in order to protect yourself and others from harm. It is a federal offense to administer any controlled substance to any person without his/her knowledge with the intent of committing a violent crime.

## 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 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 four 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.

GHB overdose 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.

\*Cities in which GHB use has been reported include Detroit, Phoenix, Honolulu, Miami, New York, Atlanta, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Dallas, Seattle, San Francisco, San Diego, New Orleans, Newark, Los Angeles, Baltimore, Boston, and Denver.

## **Ketamine**

### **Slang or Street Names: Special K, K, Vitamin K, Cat Valiums**

Ketamine is an injectable anesthetic that has been approved for both human and animal use in medical settings since 1970. About 90 percent of the ketamine legally sold today is intended for veterinary use.

Ketamine abuse gained popularity in the 1980s, when it was realized that large doses cause reactions similar to those associated with use of phencyclidine (PCP), such as dream-like states and hallucinations.

Ketamine is produced in liquid form or as a white powder that is often snorted or smoked with marijuana or tobacco products. In some cities (Boston, New Orleans, and Minneapolis/St. Paul, for example), ketamine is reportedly being injected intramuscularly.

At higher doses, ketamine can cause delirium, amnesia, impaired motor function, high blood pressure, depression, and potentially fatal respiratory problems. Low-dose intoxication from ketamine results in impaired attention, learning ability, and memory.

\*Cities in which Ketamine use has been reported include Seattle, Miami, New York, Chicago, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Newark, Boston, Detroit, New Orleans, and San Diego.

## **Methamphetamine**

### **Slang or Street Names: Speed, Ice, Chalk, Meth, Crystal, Crank, Fire, Glass**

Methamphetamine is a toxic, addictive stimulant that affects many areas of the central nervous system. The drug is often made in clandestine laboratories from relatively inexpensive over-the-counter ingredients. It is being used by diverse groups in many regions of the country, including young adults who attend raves.

Available in many forms, methamphetamine can be smoked, snorted, injected, or orally ingested. Methamphetamine is a white, odorless, bitter-tasting crystalline powder that easily dissolves in beverages.

Methamphetamine is not sold in the same way as many other illicit drugs; it is typically sold through networks, not on the street. Methamphetamine use is associated with serious health consequences, including memory loss, aggression, violence, psychotic behavior, and potential cardiac and neurological damage.

Methamphetamine abusers typically display signs of agitation, excited speech, decreased appetite, and increased physical activity levels. Methamphetamine is neurotoxic. Methamphetamine abusers may have significant reductions in dopamine transporters.

Methamphetamine use can contribute to higher rates of transmission of infectious diseases, especially hepatitis and HIV/AIDS.

\*Cities in which Methamphetamine use has been reported include San Diego, San Francisco, Phoenix, Atlanta, St. Louis, Denver, Dallas, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Philadelphia, Seattle, and many rural regions of the country.

## Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD)

### **Slang or Street Names: Acid, Boomers, Yellow Sunshine**

LSD is a hallucinogen. It induces abnormalities in sensory perceptions. The effects of LSD are unpredictable depending on the amount taken, on the surroundings in which the drug is used, and on the user's personality, mood, and expectations.

LSD is typically taken by mouth. It is sold in tablet, capsule, and liquid forms as well as in pieces of blotter paper that have absorbed the drug. Typically, an LSD user feels the effects of the drug 30 to 90 minutes after taking it. The physical effects include dilated pupils, higher body temperature, increased heart rate and blood pressure, sweating, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, dry mouth, and tremors. LSD users report numbness, weakness, or trembling, and nausea is common.

There are two long-term disorders associated with LSD, persistent psychosis and hallucinogen persisting perception disorder (which used to be called "flashbacks").

## More Information

[Fact Sheet on Stimulants](#)

**URPD:**  
(804)-289-8715

**U of R Student Health Services:**

(804)-289-8064

**Counseling and Psychological services (CAPS):**

(804)-289-8911

**Title IX:**

(804)-289-8464

**Safe Harbor:**

(804)-287-7877

**Hoffman-LaRoche, Inc. (Rohypnol Drug Manufacturer):**

1-800-608-6540

**National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information:**

1-800-729-6686

**National Institute on Drug Abuse:**

[www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)

**Drug Enforcement Agency**

**Public Affairs Section**

700 Army Navy Drive

Arlington, Virginia 22202

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