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Health Education Program

Date rape drugs:

What every college woman needs to know

Despite the growing prevalence of date rape drugs such as GHB and Rohypnol on college campuses, students can protect themselves against drug-induced sexual assault.

By Dan Holbert

It's Friday night, time to wind down, go dancing and enjoy socializing. You might be at a club, party or social event where both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages are served. You are with people you know, and some new acquaintances, so you are feeling comfortable. Someone, at some point in the evening, secretly drops a drug like Rohypnol or GHB into your drink. The drug is odorless, colorless, and usually tasteless when it dissolves, so you do not notice it. As you continue to consume your drink, the drug begins to take its effect. You feel extremely intoxicated, weak, and helpless. This effect may lead to a state of unconsciousness and when you wake up, you have no recollection of what happened. You are vulnerable to being raped or sexually assaulted.

In America, 27% of women between ages 15-24 have been victims of rape or attempted rape. In 8% of these cases the rapist administered some form of tranquilizer, not including alcohol, to his victim.

GHB and Rohypnol, commonly known as ruffies, are the most frequently used date rape drugs. The pharmaceutical manufacturer Hoffman-La Roche produces ruffies in Mexico, South America, and Europe for use as a sleep aid. No legal market for ruffies exists in the United States. GHB and Rohypnol lack color, odor, and flavor, and dissolve readily in liquid. GHB exists in both liquid and powder form. Ruffies in pill form can be easily mistaken for aspirin. The symptoms of both drugs include impaired judgment, loss of inhibition, dizziness, blackout, and amnesia. People affected by date rape drugs appear extremely intoxicated, regardless of how

much they've actually had to drink. Since these drugs can cause blackouts and amnesia, they frequently protect the attacker's identity from his victim.

Most rapists choose a bar or a social party to administer the drug to a woman. In these situations, a pill or small amount of powder can easily be placed into a person's drink. Women can greatly reduce their risk of drug-induced rape—and close the window of opportunity that rapists need—by following a few simple guidelines:

- Don't put your drink down, for any reason.
- Don't accept open drinks, and avoid punch bowls or coolers of jungle juice.
- In bars, only accept drinks from the bartender or server.
- Be alert to the behavior of friends, and have

them watch you. Be extremely wary of anyone who appears overly drunk after consuming only a small amount of alcohol.

- Make and keep plans regarding with whom you will leave the party or bar, and at what time.

If you wake up and suspect you are the victim of drug-induced rape, there are several things to remember. First, refrain from showering, bathing, douching, changing clothes, or straightening up the scene of the crime. All of these activities destroy medical and legal evidence. If you decide to report the incident, first call the police, then go to the hospital to have medical evidence collected. This generally involves a physical exam and a urine analysis to test for evidence of date rape drugs. The efficacy of the urine test depends largely on the time between administration of the drug and testing. Date rape drugs usually leave the system within 72 hours, so waste as little time as possible. Testing for pregnancy and STIs, as well as information regarding support programs, is available at the hospital and at the Health Center. According to Sepi Afrakhteh, an intern at the University's counseling center, "The most important thing to do is to seek both medical and psychological help. At the counseling center, we offer individual therapy for survivors of sexual assault. In addition, they can utilize other services such as groups offered through Sexual Assault Support Services (SASS). It is essential that women surround themselves with different sources of support."

By following these guidelines, you can prevent falling victim to this increasingly common crime. If you or someone you know needs to report a crime, or talk to a counselor, call SASS at 343-7277, 24 hours a day, or contact the University of Oregon Counseling center at 346-3227. Hoffman-La Roche, the manufacturer of GHB and Rohypnol, offers free urine testing to anyone who suspects they've been given ruffies. Have your doctor call (800) 608-6540.



Are diets all that they are hyped up to be?

Fad diets continue to be popular with college students, but studies suggest they are both ineffective and potentially harmful.

By Nora Aaron

It seems that you cannot go anywhere without hearing about dieting. Television and magazines bombard us with diet ads. The high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet and other fad diets have become heated topics of debate, and, at times, it seems like everyone is on such a diet. You do not have to look hard to find doctors and nurses who are on these diets themselves. Popular magazines are filled with success stories, which advocate dieting, while news shows, newspapers, and health professionals warn that fad-diets can be harmful. So,

what is the truth? If these diets do not work, then why are so many people on them? Finding the truth can be difficult when there is so much hype surrounding these diets in the media and within the diet industry itself. When assessing whether or not such a diet is right for you or even healthy in general, it is important to review some facts:

According to E.D.A.P. (Eating Disorders Awareness and Prevention), 95% of people on these kinds of diets gain the weight back, usually within one to five years.

Recent studies have shown that more Americans are overweight than ever before, with nearly 30% of them being obese, putting them at higher risk for many health problems, including heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

The percentage of women suffering from eating disorders is rapidly increasing not only in the U.S., but also in countries across the globe. Nearly 25% of college-aged women suffer from disordered eating at some point in their college career.

Diets can also deprive you of energy and restrict your brainpower, making you feel tired and sluggish. Going on calorie-restricted diets will actually slow down your metabolism and potentially put your body into a starvation mode.

If studies have indicated that these diets are harmful, then why are so many people still on them? Probably because the television and media promote a feminine ideal that is representative of less than 5% of the population. There are many ways to maintain a healthy weight without compro-

mising your performance in school, your health, or your happiness. Strive to:

- Eat a balanced diet with food from all of the food groups.
- Eat enough calories to sustain your activity level.
- Learn to accept your body. Do not let your weight determine how you feel about yourself or affect your self-esteem.
- Exercise regularly by doing activities that you enjoy.

For more information on healthy eating habits, stop by the University Health Center. They have a terrific lending library from which you can take out books, you could speak to a peer health educator, or you can meet with the nutritionist to help improve your eating habits. Contact the Health Education Program at 346-4456.

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