

# GHB, KETAMINE, & ROHYPNOL

GHB and Rohypnol are predominantly central nervous system depressants. Because they are often colorless, tasteless, and odorless, they can be added to beverages and ingested unknowingly. These drugs emerged a few years ago as "date rape" 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.

## GHB

Since about 1990, GHB (gamma hydroxybutyrate) has been abused 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 use 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 1,4 butanediol (BD) have been involved in poisonings, overdoses, date rapes, and deaths.



## Ketamine

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

use. It can be injected or snorted. Ketamine is also known as "special K" or "vitamin K."

Certain doses of ketamine can cause dream-like states and hallucinations. In high doses, ketamine can cause delirium, amnesia, impaired motor function, high blood pressure, depression, and potentially fatal respiratory problems.

## Rohypnol

Rohypnol, a trade name for flunitrazepam, belongs to a class of drugs known as benzodiazepines. When mixed with alcohol, 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 use 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.

Rohypnol, however, continues to be a problem among treatment admissions in Texas along the Mexican border. **ew**



\* The latest data on drug abuse-related hospital emergency department (ED) visits are from the 2002 Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) report. For detailed information, visit [www.samhsa.gov/statistics/statistics.html](http://www.samhsa.gov/statistics/statistics.html), or call the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 1-800-729-6686.

\*\* From Community Epidemiology Work Group (CEWG), based on data published in the CEWG Advance Report for December 2002. CEWG reports are on NIDA's Web site at [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov).

\*\*\* Also known as "drug rape," "acquaintance rape," or "drug-assisted" assault.

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