

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DATE RAPE DRUGS

Statistics

- In a study using data from 119 schools over 3 years, 72% of reported rape victims reported being raped while intoxicated. Mohler-Kuo, M. et al., *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 65(1), 2004.
- In 2005, nearly half of female rape victims experienced either drug-facilitated or incapacitated rape. Kilpatrick, et al., "Drug Facilitated, Incapacitated, and Forcible Rape: A National Study," NIJ, 2007.
- In 2001, more than 97,000 students aged 18-24 years were victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape. Hingson, et al., *Annual Review of Public Health*, 2005.
- Only 2% of college student victims sexually assaulted while incapacitated reported their assault to a law enforcement agency. Krebs, et al., "The Campus Sexual Assault Study," NIJ, 2007.

Overview of the Issue

- Alcohol is the primary date rape drug; it is accessible, affordable, and effective. It is harder for intoxicated victims to evaluate risk and resist assault; it can also cause blackouts and memory loss.
- Date rape drugs are typically central nervous system depressants with effects including impaired judgment, lowered inhibitions, confusion, drowsiness, intoxication, impaired motor coordination, unconsciousness and impaired memory. Seizures, coma or death can follow if combined with alcohol and each other. These drugs are usually tasteless, colorless, odorless and dissolvable. The effects tend to begin 15-20 minutes after ingestion, last 12-24 hours and are undetectable in the system 12-72 hours later.
- Popular drugs include Rohypnol ('roofies' or 'roach'), gamma hydroxybutyrate ('GHB' or 'liquid ecstasy') and ketamine ('special k'), which are all banned or controlled substances in the U.S.
- Drug trend analysts are alert to the influx of Burandanga into the US. Its legal form, scopolamine, treats Parkinson's disease, motion sickness and sleep disorders. Its herbal form has been long used in South America in rapes, robberies and abductions. The effects are immediate and more devastating than Rohypnol or GHB.
- Law enforcement evidence to substantiate suspected drug-facilitated assaults often turns out inconclusive because many victims do not seek assistance until hours or days later; in part because the drugs have impaired recall, and in part because victims may not recognize the signs of sexual assault. By the time they report a suspected assault; conclusive forensic evidence may have been lost.

What You Can Do

- Risk-reducing behaviors include ordering your own drink and keeping it with you at all times, not sharing or exchanging drinks, and discarding unattended or unusual tasting or looking drinks.
- Go to clubs or parties with trusted friends and appoint a non-drinker. Know the danger signs and take action if someone is acting drunk, gets sick or passes out after drinking.
- If you think you have been drugged, get to a safe place and ask a friend to stay with you. Call the police and get medical care. The body metabolizes these drugs very quickly, so get a urine sample as soon as possible. If you suspect sexual assault has occurred, try to preserve all physical evidence and have a sexual assault exam.

Impact on Survivors

- Survivors of drug-facilitated sexual assault suffer memory loss as well as loss of perception of safety and well being, which can amplify traumatic symptoms and increase the fear of adverse consequences. The loss of memory from drugging is a separate act of victimization and trauma.
- Many survivors also experience horror, powerlessness and humiliation. Memory loss may cause an inability to recognize or accept the signs of trauma, or lead others to disbelieve or minimize the incident. The upward battle to obtain proof, even memory, accounts for very low reporting rates for this crime.

Quotable

- Any sexual act without consent is sexual assault. Drug-facilitated rape robs the victim of memory. Not being able to remember is just as traumatic as not being able to forget. Shared knowledge of the existing danger and positive peer pressure among friends can help deter perpetrators.

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