

Beware

by Yee Jee Tso

The use of drugs to facilitate sexual assault has grown rapidly in the last decade. More than three quarters of college students who have experienced sexual assaults are under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol at the time. Any drug administered to assault victims with or without their knowledge that inhibits their ability to protect themselves from attack or to make sound judgements is, by definition, a “date-rape drug”. The following are the most common and insidious of these drugs.

Name → Rohypnol (Flunitrazepam)

Nicknames → Roofies, Roaches, Ropes, R2s, Roches, Forget Pill, Mexican Valium

Description → A prescription drug used in Europe and Latin America, Rohypnol is illegal in North America.

Usage → It is a benzodiazepine primarily used as a hypnotic. (Detailed information about benzodiazepines and sleep aids is available in the February/March 2001 issue of WellnessOptions.)

Effects → Ten times more potent than Valium, it produces drastic effects within 20-30 minutes following ingestion. These include sedation, muscle relaxation, disorientation, slowing of psychomotor response, and even amnesia. Effects can last up to 8 hours

Form → Tablet form in 0.5 to 2 milligram doses. Colourless, odourless, and tasteless and readily dissolves in any liquid, making it extremely dangerous in social settings. Most victims unknowingly consume the drug after it has been slipped into their drinks. (The manufacturer, Hoffman-La Roche, is producing a form of the drug that changes colour and texture when mixed with alcohol.)

Warning signs → Someone who has ingested Rohypnol will seem more intoxicated than warranted by the amount of alcohol they’ve consumed. Signs may include: tiredness or drowsiness, problems with vision, dizziness, confusion, impaired memory, black outs, lowered inhibition, nausea, and unconsciousness.

Preventative measures → In social settings, never leave drinks unattended. Never accept beverages in open containers from anyone you do not trust implicitly. If you believe you have been drugged, let your friends know immediately, call 911 or get a ride to emergency. Try to save a sample of the drink for analysis. Avoid leaving the bar alone or with a stranger, even just to “get some fresh air.”

Name → GHB (Gamma Hydroxybutyrate)

Nicknames → G, Liquid X/Ecstasy, Easy Lay, Grievous Bodily Harm, Georgia Home Boy

Description → A sedative-hypnotic originally developed as a general anesthetic.

Usage → Used as a dietary supplement to aid bodybuilding since it purportedly causes the release of growth hormone.

Effects → Effects are unpredictable and dose-dependant and may include feelings of relaxation, sensuality, euphoria, loss of inhibitions, and hallucinations. Large doses can induce sudden sleep. Takes effect as quickly as 15-30 minutes and lasts 2-3 hours, up to 10 times longer when mixed with alcohol.

Form → Distributed in tablet form, powder, or dissolved in water or other liquids. Odourless and colourless, but may have a salty, slightly metallic taste and an oily texture, depending on the strength of the solution. When mixed in a beverage, the taste will be diluted, but the drink may seem a bit “off”. Often consumed unintentionally in social situations.

Warning signs → Severe reactions when mixed with alcohol or other drugs. Excessive intoxication, intense drowsiness, vomiting, giddiness, diarrhea, seizure, coma, respiratory arrest, and death are possible side effects. Possibility of vomiting while unconscious, leading to asphyxiation.

Preventative measures → All of the precautions listed above for Rohypnol are applicable here. Often taken intentionally as a recreational drug – extreme caution must be taken with dosage. Even a small overdose can throw the user into a “G-hole”, an undesired state of unconsciousness and/or debauchery.

Name → Ketamine Hydrochloride, or 2-(2-Chlorophenyl)-2-(methylamino)-cyclohexanone

Nicknames → K, Special K, Kay, Keets

Description → A “dissociative anaesthetic” that separates perception from sensation, similar to PCP, DXM and nitrous oxide.

Usage → Used in veterinary medicine.

Effects → Produces dreamy, floaty feelings and numbness in the extremities at low doses. 100 milligrams is enough to induce a “K-hole”: an intense, hallucinogenic state and out-of-body feeling likened to a “near-death experience”. Effects appear in 15–20 minutes depending on method of administration, lasts 2-3 hours.

Form → Distributed as liquid or powder. It is commonly snorted, but can be swallowed, smoked, and injected intramuscularly. Colourless, with a nondescript smell and bitter taste. Takes longer to dissolve but still easily mixed into any beverage.

Warning signs → Dangerous reactions with alcohol or other depressants. Contraindications with antibiotics, antipsychotics, caffeine, and other drugs.

Possible side effects → Impaired motor function, immobility causing hypothermia, respiratory depression, nausea, hallucinations, delirium, and amnesia.

Preventative measures → All of the precautions listed above for Rohypnol and GHB are applicable here. Often disguised as Ecstasy and offered to a victim.

