

Alcohol & Other Drugs

How Do I Know If I Have A Drinking Problem?

Below is a set of questions designed to help you find out if alcohol use may be a problem:

- Do you prefer to drink alone rather than with others?
- Does your drinking cause problems with school (e.g., falling grades) or at work (e.g. being late)?
- Do you drink to escape your problems?
- When you drink, do you get very emotional?
- Do you ever have memory loss or blackouts due to drinking?
- When you drink, do you often get drunk even when you did not mean to drink to excess?
- Do you find that you have to drink more and more to get the same effect?
- Do you get into trouble with the law or injure yourself when you drink?

If you answered "yes" to one or more of these questions, you may have a drinking problem. If you have a drinking problem, or suspect that you have one, there are many others out there like you. As a matter of fact, more than 10 million people suffer from alcoholism.

What Effects Can Alcohol Have On Me?

Immediate physical effects from alcohol include: loss of muscle control, impaired reflexes, vomiting, and unconsciousness. Because alcohol goes directly into the bloodstream, overuse of alcohol can affect almost every system in the body. Long term use can cause cancer, brain damage, cirrhosis of the liver, weight gain, and birth defects if drinking while pregnant. Excessive drinking can also cause serious accidents, injuries, and death. For example, more than one out of every three motor vehicle fatalities involves alcohol and one out of every four drownings are alcohol-related.

Alcohol can have psychological effects as well. It can affect your school work and family and social relationships. Studies have shown that students who drink alcohol to excess end up with poorer school grades and take longer time to complete their degrees. Because alcohol lowers inhibitions and impairs judgment, risky and violent behavior can result. For example, students impaired by alcohol often engage in vandalism and physical fights. Friendships and romantic relationships can also be jeopardized. Alcohol can lead people to say or do things they might regret, like making a bad decision about having sex with someone. Alcohol abuse can also lead to family conflicts and broken households.

One does not have to be using alcohol to be damaged by its effects. Children and partners of alcoholics can be seriously affected too. Family members and other loved ones often suffer from psychological symptoms, including low self-esteem, depression, health problems, and relationship problems, like difficulties getting close to others. They may also find themselves minimizing the severity of their loved one's problem, feeling responsible for the problem, or feeling a lot of anger, shame, and resentment.

In addition, family and friends of alcoholics may display their own addictive behaviors. Being related to an alcoholic or living with an alcoholic puts one at greater risk for alcoholism and other addictions, including gambling and overeating. Finally, family and friends who are close to an alcoholic often take on their responsibilities, attempting to function for them in ways that are often unhealthy. This is commonly known as "codependency" and includes feelings of having lost control over one's own emotions and behavior.

How Can I Get Help?

Help is available and easy to find! There are many different types of treatments to help those whose lives are affected by alcohol. For severe alcohol addictions, there are detoxification programs that require the alcoholic to stay in a hospital or a treatment center. There are also programs that treat the problem at a clinic that the patient can attend daily. Once the physical addiction is addressed, follow-up treatment is always recommended.

Treatments for detoxified patients and those with less severe problems include individual, family, or couple's therapy. Support groups are also available for sufferers of alcoholism and their family members or loved ones. You can contact ASAP at 916-734-2727 or CAPS at 530-752-0871 to get more information about alcohol treatment or you can call:

Alcoholics Anonymous - (916) 454-1100 or (916) 454-1771

www.aasacramento.org or www.aa.org

The National Drug and Alcohol Abuse Referral Hotline: 1- 800 - 821- 4357

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
<http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/>
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMSHA) clearinghouse for information on most available drugs, including alcohol and tobacco. The information is in the form of various reports. Information emphasizes the negative aspects of alcohol abuse and drug use.
- How Alcohol Works
www.howstuffworks.com/alcohol.htm
Simple, yet very informative website that objectively explains the chemistry and biochemistry of alcohol, alcohol absorption and elimination. Topics include: What is alcohol? How alcohol enters and leaves the body; the effects of alcohol and how the body responds to alcohol. All topics have printable versions. Site also has info about alcohol abuse and numerous links to other websites with more information.

Other Drugs

- Psychoactive Drugs
<http://www.erowid.org/psychoactives/psychoactives.shtml>
Information about the history, safe use, chemistry, and laws pertaining to many different drugs, including alcohol, caffeine and tobacco. It is also very up to date with the latest "designer" drugs available on the street. It has links to relevant books and media coverage, and forums/chat rooms where users can share their experiences.

Alcohol and Sexual Assault

Various drugs are used to facilitate rape. Alcohol is by far the most frequently used. In a national study of college students, 75% of males and 55% of females involved in date rape had been drinking or using drugs prior to the assault. Alcohol impairs inhibitions, judgment and decision-making. Mixing alcohol and sex puts you at risk for sexual assault, sexually transmitted infections, or simply being in an embarrassing and awkward situation in the morning.

Alcohol use by women makes them more vulnerable to sexual assault. While men, when drinking, are also at increased risk of being sexually victimized, they are also more likely to engage in coercive sexual behaviors - including sexual assault.

- As many as 70% of college students admit to having engaged in sexual activity primarily as a result of being under the influence of alcohol, or to having sex they wouldn't have had if they had been sober.
- One in twelve college males admit to having committed acts that met the legal definition of rape.
- 60% of college women who are infected with STDs, including genital herpes and HIV, report that they were under the influence of alcohol at the time they had intercourse with the infected person.
- One in five college students abandon safer sex practices when they're drunk, even if they always protect themselves when sober.

Alcohol is sometimes used as an excuse for unacceptable behavior. When a man sexually assaults an acquaintance, he is seen as less responsible for his actions if he was drunk. Our societal double standard, however, results in the woman being seen as "to blame" for the assault if she was intoxicated. In addition, survivors who were drinking when they were sexually assaulted tend to have more feelings of self-blame. It is important to remember that no one deserves to be raped. Choosing to drink alcohol should not be equated with choosing to be sexually assaulted.

According to state law, a person who is unconscious (passed out), or incapacitated, whether from alcohol, drugs, or illness, cannot give consent to sex. Therefore, if sexual contact occurs, it is sexual assault. When there is any uncertainty about your partner's ability to give consent, it is wise to wait for another time. To engage in sexual activity with someone who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs simply is not worth the risk.

Newer Date Rape Drugs: Rohypnol, GHB and Ketamine

Rohypnol, GHB and other drugs are sometimes used to facilitate sexual assault. They can be slipped into the drink of an unsuspecting victim, causing incapacitation in just minutes.

- **Rohypnol: What is it?**
Rohypnol (the brand name of Flunitrazepam) is a benzodiazepine like the tranquilizer Valium, yet it is 10 times more potent. Rohypnol has been called the "date rape drug" because of its use in sexual assaults. Rohypnol produces profound, prolonged sedation, a feeling of well being and short-term memory loss. Sedation occurs 15-20 minutes following the administration of just 2 mg of the drug and lasts from 4 to 24 hours.
- **Rohypnol: How Can I Recognize It?**
In the U.S., the drug is targeted at young people for several reasons. One is that Rohypnol is sold very cheaply (a tablet can be bought for under \$5). The drug has been re-formulated by the manufacturer with a dye that is supposed to be visible if slipped into a drink. It is also designed to dissolve more slowly and leave a film on the liquid's surface; however, there are copycat drugs coming from other countries that do not have these characteristics.

In its newest form, Rohypnol is distributed as an olive green, oblong tablet with the # 5Y2 imprinted on it. Its older form was a small, white, round "aspirin like" tablet that could be crushed into a powder. Copycat forms may be any color. It can also be found as a powdered substance. The tablets come packaged in bubble-foil packets and have a "clean, pure" look to them. Some of the common street names for Rohypnol include: roofies, roopies, circles, ruffies, roches, and "the forget pill".

- **Rohypnol: What are the Effects on the Body?**
The effects of Rohypnol are similar to other sedatives: a drunk appearance (drowsiness, light-headedness, dizziness), muscle weakness, fatigue, slurred speech, loss of motor coordination, loss of judgment, and amnesia that lasts up to 24 hours. Death has resulted in Rohypnol users due to coma induction or a combination effect of the drug with other drugs, most notably alcohol. Some of the adverse effects include: hallucinations, delirium, convulsions, coma, numbness, nausea, seizures, and sleep disruption. Patterns of abuse involve mixing the drug with alcohol, spiking drinks, including soft drinks in order to commit sexual assault, and ingesting or snorting the drug to boost the effects of cocaine or heroin.
- **GHB: What is it?**
A drug that has not been approved by the Food and Drug Administration since 1990 has made an illegal comeback. The substance is called Gamma Hydroxybutyrate, or GHB. It is made from ingredients found in health food and chemical supply stores. GHB is illegal in the U.S. and cannot be bought; however, it is still being clandestinely made and dispensed at night clubs and elsewhere. GHB is sometimes used by athletes because it promotes the release of growth hormones.

- **GHB: What are the Effects on the Body?**
GHB creates deep sedation quickly, like rohypnol, and is considered a "date rape" drug. Known also as Grievous Bodily Harm, Liquid X, Salt Water, Scoop or Easy Lay, GHB in its most common form is a clear liquid; but it may also come in a white, grainy, powdered form. GHB is readily absorbed and reaches the brain quickly. Intoxication effects begin 10 to 20 minutes after drug is taken and typically last up to 4 hours depending on the dosage. A one-half gram quantity of GHB renders the victim helpless to defend against an assault. Side effects include drowsiness, nausea, respiratory distress, vomiting, headaches, dizziness, disorientation, amnesia, coma or even death (especially when combined with alcohol). Overdose can happen quickly.
- **Ketamine: What is it?**
Ketamine hydrochloride, known as Special K and K, is a general anesthetic for human and veterinary use. Ketamine produces effects similar to PCP with the visual effects of LSD. The drug effects can include: distorts sense of balance, time judgment and ability to communicate, blurred vision, disorientation, trembling, and loss of consciousness for up to 18 to 24 hours, amnesia, high blood pressure, recurrent flash backs, potentially fatal respiratory problems.

Ketamine sold on the streets comes from diverted legitimate supplies, primarily veterinary clinics. Its appearance is similar to that of pharmaceutical grade cocaine, and it is snorted, placed in alcoholic beverages, or smoked in combination with marijuana. The incidence of ketamine abuse is increasing, and accounts of ketamine abuse appear in reports of parties attended by teenagers and young adults.

How Can I Prevent Becoming a Victim of Date Rape Drugs?

- Do not accept beverages, including nonalcoholic ones, from someone not known and trusted well.
- Carry cab money.
- In a bar, only accept drinks from the bartender or wait staff.
- Always watch your drink at bars and parties. Never leave your drink unattended. Be aware of what's going on around you.
- Be alert to behavior of friends. If someone appears much more drunk than they should be, considering the amount of alcohol consumed, be concerned and closely monitor the person's behavior.
- If you feel dizzy, disoriented or physically uncomfortable in any way, tell someone you trust and ask for help in getting home.

What to do if You are Victimized:

If you or a person you know might have been drugged without your knowledge and/or assaulted under the influence of Rohypnol, GHB, Ketamine, or any drug:

- Call the police (911) for assistance & immediately seek medical help
- Describe any and all symptoms fully to your physician
- Make your physician aware that you may have been drugged. It is imperative that you be tested as soon as possible for the drug's presence in your body.
- Rohypnol can be detected in the blood up to 4 hours after ingestion and in urine up to 48 hours after ingestion. GHB is normally not detectable in blood or urine after only 12 hours.
- Try not to urinate prior to providing urine samples. If possible, find cups or glasses from which you drank and/or a sample of the suspect beverage, and submit these to the police for laboratory tests. For general information call 1-800-720-1076.

How You Can Help a Friend Who Has Been Sexually Assaulted/Raped

- Be supportive by listening and taking what your friend says seriously. Avoid "why" questions; they can make the survivor feel judged.
- Let your friend know the assault was not their fault. Many survivors will blame themselves for not preventing the assault. Challenge this belief with the message that the fault and responsibility lie with the perpetrator, not the survivor. This is true even if your friend engaged in risky behavior.
- Encourage your friend to seek medical attention, and offer to accompany her or him to the medical clinic or hospital.
- If you want to hug or touch your friend to show your support, ask if this is okay first. Remember, the survivor was violated and did not have control over what was done to his/her body. In asking if the survivor wants to be touched, you begin to help your friend take back control and avoid any re-traumatizing.
- Allow your friend to make her/his own decisions about whether or not to report the assault, who to tell, etc. Support those decisions, even if you don't agree with them. Taking back control is an important part of the survivor's healing process.
- Allow the survivor to share what he/she wants when he/she wants. Don't pressure your friend to share information before he/she is ready, and don't judge her/his actions leading up to, during, or after the assault. Regardless of what the survivor was wearing, drinking, etc., the perpetrator is responsible for the assault.
- Offer resources. Your friend is entitled to support. Ask if she/he would like to speak to an advocate, mental health professional or other person(s) they trust.
- If the survivor thinks that she/he may want to report the assault, or at least keep that option open, it is important to preserve all evidence. Methods for preserving evidence that you can share: Don't

wash, shower, or brush your teeth. If you have to change clothes, keep the clothes you were wearing in a paper bag. Do not launder items from the area where the assault occurred, e.g. bed sheets.

- Get support/consultation for yourself. You deserve it.

Site: <http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu/home/healthtopics/alcoholdrugs.shtml>

ASAP offers confidential, cost-free assessment, counseling, consultation and referral services to all UCDHS faculty, staff, and their family members. Whether the problem is work-related, personal, career or relationship focused, ASAP can assist you in evaluating and resolving the problem.

You can call ASAP at 916-734-2727 for an appointment.