

## G H B

GHB, gammahydroxybutyrate, or gammahydroxybutyric acid, is a fast-acting central nervous system depressant. It is a COLORLESS and ODORLESS LIQUID with a salty taste, but it is also used in POWDER and CAPSULE forms. GHB is an illegal substance but it is increasingly used as a recreational drug and hallucinogen.

### What Are Other Names for GHB?

Some street names for GHB are: "Liquid Ecstasy," "Grievous Bodily Harm," "Georgia Home Boy," "Liquid X," "Liquid E," "GBH," "Soap," "Scoop," "Easy Lay," "Salty Water," "G-Riffick," "Cherry Meth," "Nature's Quaalude," "Zonked," "Organic Quaalude," and "Somatomax."

### What Are the Effects of GHB?

A low to moderate dose is considered to be between 5ml and 15ml or 1-2 grams. At first, one may experience euphoria and relaxation/calmness. Adverse effects can occur 15 minutes to an hour after ingestion. People experience nausea, drowsiness, respiratory distress, dizziness, seizures, and amnesia. There have been cases of people falling into comas. Poisonings and deaths resulting from ingestion of the drug have been well documented. A withdrawal syndrome, including sweating, insomnia, muscular cramping, tremors and anxiety, can develop.

GHB intensifies feelings of intoxication and may result in enhanced sexual feelings. It produces a similar feeling to alcohol; its effects are exacerbated by combining it with alcohol. But the same dose of GHB can have different effects on different people - with serious, negative outcomes.

GHB has been marketed as a health food product for its hypnotic effects and also to promote weight loss and muscle development. Health food stores and pharmacies also have sold GHB over the counter as a dietary supplement. GHB promotes slow-wave sleep, which is when muscle growth hormone release takes place, but it has not been directly linked to resulting in increased body mass.

### Is GHB a New Drug?

No. In 1990, acute poisonings contributed to GHB were already being reported. The recent dance club and "rave" (partying and dancing all night) scenes, however, have sparked renewed interest in the drug.

### How Are GHB and Rohypnol Similar?

GHB is sometimes characterized, as is Rohypnol, as a "date-rape" drug. Because it is odorless and colorless, it can be slipped into someone's drink; in the dance club/party scene, GHB is often mixed with water and passed around. People could try to use GHB as a means to incapacitate women for purposes of committing sexual assault. GHB may produce amnesia and the victim may not be able to recall what happened. In addition,

since GHB may make a person less inhibited and may increase sexual feelings, establishing whether or not a rape occurred becomes more difficult.

### **Is GHB Legal?**

Possession of GHB is not illegal under federal law, but it is illegal for any person to produce or sell GHB in the United States. The Food and Drug Administration has re-issued a warning against the use of GHB; **THE DRUG IS NOT APPROVED FOR ANY USE.** (In Europe GHB is an approved drug available by prescription only.)

In Georgia and Rhode Island, GHB has been classified as a Schedule I drug—a drug that does not have a currently accepted medical use, has a high abuse potential, and is not proven to be safe under medical supervision. The Drug Enforcement Administration is considering a scheduling review for possible control of GHB under the Federal Controlled Substances Act.

### **What Medical Uses Does GHB Have?**

GHB has been studied for its ability to induce short-term coma and possible surgical anesthesia. It has also been used successfully as a sleep-inducing aid to treat people who suffer from narcolepsy, a rare sleeping sickness, though its effects are short-term. Other potential clinical roles are treatment of alcohol and opiate dependence, protection against hemorrhagic shock, and improving liver function. While GHB has been used in clinical testing, it has never been approved for sale as a medical product in the United States.

### **Is GHB Use Spreading?**

The drug has surfaced in 27 states. Most cases have appeared in California, Florida, Georgia, New York, and Texas.

### **If You Think You Might Have Taken GHB, What Should You Do?**

Obtain emergency medical assistance immediately. You cannot be sure of the strength of the dose you received. Even though some people may not seem to have a bad reaction to GHB, the drug is potentially fatal.