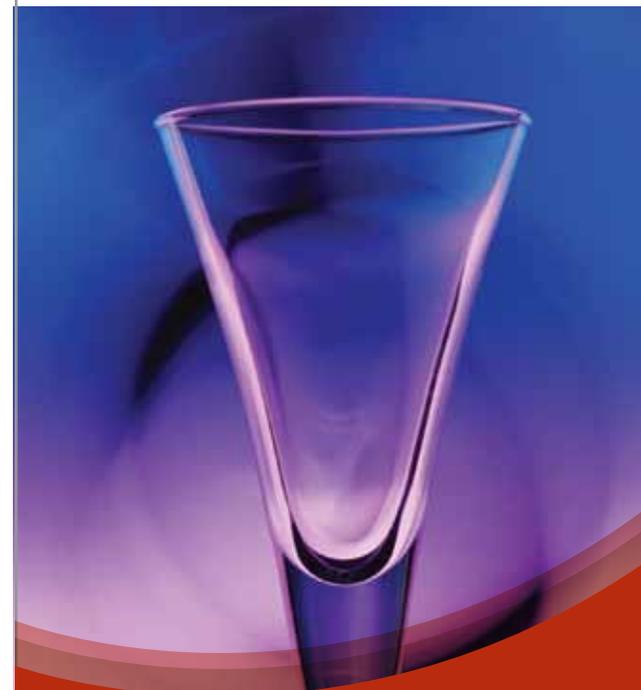


# GHB



## Contact Us

Please contact us for further information.

Centre for Student Development and Counselling

416-979-5195

[www.ryerson.ca/counselling](http://www.ryerson.ca/counselling)

Authors: Ken Fowler, Sarah Fung, Jennifer Pham, Lisa Stephens,  
Kelly Collins, Justin Johnstone, David Morton, Shannon Naylor,  
Amanda Beaubien & Brianda Rosales  
Series Editors: Kelly McShane, Amy Brown-Bowers, Amelia Usher



Community Engaged  
Learning & Teaching  
Student Experience Centre  
Faculty of Arts

Faculty of Arts

Faculty of Arts  
Department of Psychology

Front cover photo credit: [www.freeimages.co.uk](http://www.freeimages.co.uk)

RYERSON  
UNIVERSITY

Everyone Makes a Mark

# What is GHB?

GHB (Gamma Hydroxybutyrate) is a naturally occurring substance found in the body. However, as a man-made chemical, it is a drug classified as a central nervous system depressant, meaning that it slows down your bodily functions like breathing and heart rate. GHB is used medically for sleeping disorders like narcolepsy, anxiety, and symptom relief during alcohol dependence and opiate withdrawal.

GHB is also used as a recreational drug predominately within the body-building community for its anabolic properties. GHB is found in an increasing number of social settings including bars, clubs, rave parties, and gyms. Its use as a club drug has been on the rise since the early 90's.

GHB is a tasteless and odourless liquid. If taken orally it is often a clear colourless liquid. It is also possible for GHB to be sold as a white powder or as a capsule. The inability to identify GHB makes it possible for predators to slip it into drinks therefore earning it the 'date rape drug'.

It is otherwise known as;  
Fantasy, G, Liquid Ecstasy,  
Liquid X, Grievous Bodily Harm,  
Organic Quaalude, Salty Water,  
Scoop, Soap, Easy Lay, Vita-G  
and Georgia Home Boy.

## Who uses it?

GHB is typically known as a recreational "club drug" and often used as a date rape drug on young women. Evidence suggests that its use is increasing internationally. Roughly 1% of club drug users report using GHB regularly.

Although GHB is difficult to detect because it is eliminated from the body very quickly (usually within 6 hours) GHB accounts for 27.2% of intoxications with illicit drugs leading to emergency care.

GHB use is more common in males than females. Use was also reportedly higher among gay or bisexual individuals seeking an energy increase in a club atmosphere.

GHB has been found in 0.2–4.4% of reported sexual assaults.

## What are the effects?

Effects of GHB can be felt 10 – 20 minutes after the drug is ingested and lasts for 3-6 hours depending on the size of the dose.

GHB can cause a variety of effects including:

- Relaxation and euphoria
- Hallucinations
- Amnesia
- Loss of consciousness
- Vomiting
- Convulsive seizures
- Abnormal breathing that can result in decreased oxygen supply to the brain causing damage or even death
- At dangerously high doses of 60 – 70mg/kg, coma or even death is likely

When GHB is co-ingested with alcohol, the effects of the drug are amplified. As such, there is a high risk of sexual assault when used unsuspectedly.

## Treatment

The GHB user is generally back to consciousness within 2 to 4 hours. The withdrawal process takes between 10-14 days. There is no standardized treatment for GHB addiction but medications such as benzodiazepines, barbiturates, or opioids can be given to help with uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms. The treatment involves lowering the dose the person usually takes gradually to minimize the level of withdrawal symptoms.

Other types of therapy such as cognitive behavioural therapy, family therapy, as well as motivational interviewing can be useful. These therapies help the individual to see the roots of their addiction such as why and where they are using as well as helping them to see their life without the substance.

## Protect Yourself

- Always have your drink with you. (Do not leave it at the table or outside the washroom)
- Don't take drinks from strangers.
- The buddy system: always have a friend with you when you go out.
- If someone wants to purchase a drink for you, go with them to receive the drink directly from the bar tender. Do not accept a drink that is offered to you.