

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DRUGS

Sexual assault is any unwanted sexual contact. Males and females can be both sexually assaulted and sexual assailants. Sometimes a person who sexually assaults another will use force. Force can include emotional pressure, threats, physical restraint, physical harm or weapons. Sometimes a person who sexually assaults will use drugs to assist in the assault. These drugs are used to alter social inhibitions, decrease the level of consciousness, and cause confusion or lack of memory. This allows the person who is assaulting to gain control or overpower the person they intend to assault.

ALCOHOL: The number one sexual assault drug is alcohol. Alcohol comes in many forms and can affect people in many different ways. It is most often taken voluntarily. Some people become very easy going and lack judgment. Others experience dizziness, confusion, lack of coordination or “pass out”. Because alcohol is readily available and socially acceptable in many settings, it is very commonly found in cases of sexual assault.

SEDATIVES: Sedatives are prescription drugs often used as sleeping pills or to control anxiety. In combination with alcohol, their effects become exaggerated. Someone who has a sedative mixed with an alcoholic drink may experience drowsiness, confusion and loss of memory for a period of time. The effects may start 30 to 40 minutes after the drug has been swallowed.

GHB (GAMMA HYDROXYBUTYRATE): GHB is a drug that is used to control narcolepsy and alcoholism. Body builders also sometimes use it. GHB can be manufactured easily at home, making it easy to obtain. It reacts very quickly (within 15 minutes). The person who has been given GHB will show signs of rapid inhibition followed by slurred speech and nausea. They will quickly lose consciousness. The person who has been given GHB and is then sexually assaulted usually experiences amnesia and wakes up not remembering the incident. Occasionally a person will experience brief flashbacks of the incident. The drug is colourless, odourless, and has a salty taste. It is usually slipped into drinks that have a fruity or salty taste such as a margarita or daiquiri.

TO REDUCE THE RISK OF BEING DRUGGED:

- Do not leave *any* beverages unattended.
- Do not take *any* drinks from anyone you do not know well or trust.
- Do not drink from a bottle or can.
- Watch out for friends who seem unusually drunk.
- Be aware of how much you drink and stay in control.
- Go out with groups of friends – never alone.
- Let someone know if you start to feel ill.