

GHB may interact dangerously with some medications, such as protease inhibitors used to treat HIV.

Driving or operating machinery while under the influence of GHB, or any drug, increases the risk of physical injury to the user, and increases the risk of injury to others.

Is GHB addictive?

Regular use of GHB can cause physical dependence. Stopping abruptly can result in anxiety, tremors, inability to sleep and other unpleasant, potentially dangerous side-effects, including paranoia with hallucinations and high blood pressure. Dependent users should seek medical help to ease withdrawal.

What are the long-term effects of using GHB?

Because very little research has been done in this area, the long-term effects of using GHB are not known.

One in a series...

Alcohol	Hallucinogens
Alcohol, Other Drugs and Driving	Heroin
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Benzodiazepines	LSD
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Ecstasy	Rohypnol
GHB	Tobacco

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Do You Know...

Street Name: G, liquid ecstasy, liquid x, grievous bodily harm

What is it?

GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) is produced naturally in the human body in very small amounts. When taken as a recreational drug, and especially when taken in combination with alcohol or other drugs, GHB can be extremely dangerous.

GHB is a central nervous system depressant. That means it makes you sleepy, and slows down your breathing and heart rate.



GHB was first made in a laboratory in 1960. It has been used experimentally as an anesthetic, and as a treatment for sleep disorders and alcohol withdrawal.

Before it was banned, GHB was widely available in the U.S. in health food stores. Claims were made that it would help build muscles, burn fat and improve sex. Some called it a “safe” alternative to alcohol and conventional sleep aids. Currently GHB is illegal to possess, traffic, import or produce in Canada and the United States.

Where does GHB come from?

GHB is made in illicit labs. The chemicals and processes used vary from lab to lab, as does the strength and purity of the final product.

What does GHB look like?

In its liquid form, GHB looks like water. It has no smell, and is tasteless or has a slightly salty or solvent taste that can be easily masked. It is usually sold as a liquid in small vials. GHB is also available as a white powder or capsule.

Who uses GHB?

In recent years, GHB has gained popularity as a “club drug” among young people for its euphoric and sedative effects. Some bodybuilders continue to use it, believing it stimulates growth hormones. GHB has also been used to facilitate sexual assault.

How does GHB make you feel?

How GHB affects you depends on several things:

- your age and your body weight
- how much you take and how often you take it
- how long you’ve been taking it
- the method you use to take the drug
- the environment you’re in
- whether or not you have certain pre-existing medical or psychiatric conditions
- if you’ve taken any alcohol or other drugs (illicit, prescription, over-the-counter or herbal).

The way you feel when you take GHB is similar to the way some people feel when they drink alcohol. At a low dose, users usually feel more sociable, less inhibited and lightheaded. A slightly higher dose intensifies these effects or makes you drowsy and dizzy. A little more may cause nausea and vomiting, and a higher dose can make you slip into a deep coma-like sleep. An overdose can result in difficulty breathing, a lowered heart rate, convulsions and even death.

With GHB there is only a slight difference between a dose that produces the desired effects, and a dose that puts the user at risk. If you have a little too much GHB, the consequences can be fatal.

How long does the feeling last?

The effects of GHB can generally be felt between 10 and 20 minutes after you take it, and can last up to four hours, depending on the dose. There have been some reports of dizziness lasting for days.

Is GHB dangerous?

Yes, GHB is dangerous in a number of ways.

Since GHB is illegal, there are no controls over the strength and purity of the drugs produced. What’s sold as GHB often contains unknown drugs or other fillers, which may be toxic. You don’t know how much GHB is in the solution or what dose is safe.

With GHB it’s easy to take too much, or overdose. When taken with alcohol or other drugs, the effects of GHB are more intense, and the risk of toxic effects and overdose increases.

GHB is a potent sedative, causing users to fall into a deep coma-like sleep from which they might not be aroused for several hours. They may vomit while they’re sleeping and choke. When in a GHB sleep, convulsions can occur, often alarming others into rushing the user to the hospital for emergency care.

GHB’s liquid form allows it to be slipped into drinks, and its sedative effects prevent victims from resisting sexual assault. For this reason, it has been referred to in the media as a “date rape” drug. GHB can also cause amnesia, meaning that when people recover from the drug’s effects, they may not remember what happened. Take caution at parties and bars — watch your drink.