

Is Rohypnol addictive?

It can be. The addictive potential of Rohypnol depends on how much you take, how long you take it, and whether or not you have been dependent on any other drug.

If Rohypnol is taken daily for more than a few weeks, users may become dependent on it, feeling that they need the drug in order to relax or get to sleep. Those who are dependent on Rohypnol are "tolerant" to its effects, meaning they need more and more of the drug in order to achieve the desired results.

Those who use Rohypnol regularly for more than four weeks should see a doctor for help in managing a gradual withdrawal. Dependent Rohypnol users who stop using the drug can expect withdrawal symptoms, which may be mild to severe, including anxiety, insomnia, nausea, dizziness and depression. Abrupt withdrawal can cause severe symptoms, including convulsions and psychosis.

One in a series...

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Do You Know...

Street Name: roofies, roachies, La Roche, rope, rophies, ruffies

What is it?

Rohypnol® is the brand name of flunitrazepam, a medication with sedative effects that is produced and marketed outside North America for medical use. In Canada and the U.S., it is illegal to possess, traffic, import or produce Rohypnol.

Rohypnol belongs to a family of medications called benzodiazepines, which also includes diazepam (Valium®) and lorazepam (Ativan®). Benzodiazepines are central nervous system depressants, which decrease anxiety and cause drowsiness, and slow your heart rate, breathing and thinking. Rohypnol's main medical use is as a short-term treatment for insomnia.



Rohypnol has been referred to in the media as a “date rape” drug. While there is little evidence of Rohypnol use in Canada, there have been reports of drugs being used to facilitate sexual assault. Such cases may have involved other drugs such as GHB, ketamine, alcohol and other benzodiazepines.

What does Rohypnol look like?

Rohypnol tablets are white and are single or cross-scored on one side, with “ROCHE” and “1” or “2” in a circle on the other. Hoffman-La Roche Inc., the drug company that makes Rohypnol, has recently stopped making the higher strength 2 mg tablet. Rohypnol sold on the street is often still in the original blister packaging, leading to the mistaken belief that the drug is legal and safe. It is usually taken orally, but there are some reports of it being ground up and snorted.

Who uses Rohypnol?

When used non-medically, Rohypnol is rarely taken on its own, and is usually taken to increase the effect of other drugs, especially alcohol, marijuana or heroin. Rohypnol is also taken to decrease the after-effects of other drugs, such as cocaine, ecstasy or amphetamines.

The main recreational users of Rohypnol are teenagers and young adults, who usually combine it with alcohol.

Until recently, Rohypnol’s tablets dissolved quickly in liquid, making it easy to slip them into drinks without arousing suspicion. When the drug took effect, the victim was too sedated to resist sexual assault.

Since 1997 the tablets have been made to dissolve more slowly in liquid, turn clear beverages bright blue, and turn darker beverages murky, making it much easier to detect the presence of the drug in a drink. Despite these changes, take caution at parties and bars — watch your drink.

How does Rohypnol make you feel?

The way Rohypnol affects you depends on many factors, including:

- 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 effects of Rohypnol begin within 30 minutes and peak within two hours. As little as 1 mg can have effect for eight hours. Depending upon how much you take, Rohypnol can make you feel anything from relaxed and calm, to drowsy and clumsy, to unconscious.

Even when Rohypnol is taken without alcohol or other drugs, users can appear “drunk.” The effects of Rohypnol include reduced inhibition and judgment, slurred speech, weakness and staggering, dizziness, confusion and severe drowsiness. Users may also experience visual disturbances and amnesia. These effects are intensified when Rohypnol is combined with alcohol, and often result in “blackouts,” or periods of time, from eight to 24 hours, for which the person has no memory.

Is Rohypnol dangerous?

The most extreme and immediate dangers of Rohypnol are caused by its intoxicating and sedating effects. Recreational drug users who combine Rohypnol with other depressant drugs such as alcohol may find themselves much more stoned and drunk than they had intended. They may be unable to think clearly or protect themselves from harm. If they lose consciousness, they may vomit and choke.

When Rohypnol or other drugs are dissolved in someone’s drink without his or her knowledge, the drug becomes a partner in crime. Many assault victims have reported waking naked and bruised, having had unprotected sex, without any memory of what took place.

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

Rohypnol