

Things to know about drug-facilitated sexual assault

March 15 2023



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

The reality is that the majority of sexual assaults are carried out by friends, acquaintances, partners, exes or by a person someone has met online or at a party. Perpetrators often rely on substances (with or

without a person's knowledge) to commit sexual assault.

Here are six things you should know about drug-facilitated sexual [assault](#) and drink spiking.

1. What is drug-facilitated sexual assault?

There are two primary ways that drug-facilitated sexual assault occurs.

- A person takes advantage of someone's voluntary use of alcohol or other drugs.
- A person intentionally forces someone to consume alcohol or other drugs with or without their knowledge to manipulate the situation and commit sexual assault. This can include tactics like spiking drinks.

Many survivors have strong feelings of self-blame after a sexual assault, even when someone takes advantage of them through the use of alcohol or other drugs. It's important to remember that even when someone chooses to use substances, they are not giving up their bodily autonomy or choosing to be violated. The blame for sexual assault always rests with the person who committed the assault.

2. What substances can be used to facilitate sexual assault?

Alcohol is the most commonly used substance in drug-facilitated sexual assault, but other substances can also be slipped into alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks. This is often referred to as drink spiking.

Substances that are often used to spike drinks include:

- Prescription drugs like [sleep aids](#), anxiety medication, muscle relaxers and/or tranquilizers.
- Over-the-counter medications like Benadryl, which can increase intoxication when mixed with alcohol.
- Street drugs, like GHB, Rohypnol ("roofies"), ecstasy, molly and/or ketamine (K), which can be added to drinks (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) without changing the color, flavor or odor of the beverage.

3. What should you look out for?

If you're at a party or out with [friends](#), it's important to keep an eye out for sketchy situations that may indicate that someone is trying to facilitate sexual assault through the use of alcohol or other drugs.

Watch out for someone who is:

- Coercing or pressuring someone beyond their [comfort zone](#) to consume more alcohol or drugs than they are comfortable with to make them vulnerable.
- Initiating [sexual contact](#) with someone because they are intoxicated and less likely to resist.
- Isolating someone who has had too much to drink or is having a negative drug experience in order to take advantage of them.
- Not telling someone what is in their drink or the type of dosage of [drug](#) they are ingesting in order to incapacitate a person and gain access to them.

4. What are some common symptoms someone may experience?

Many symptoms of drugging are similar to those someone might

experience from [excessive drinking](#) or purposefully mixing substances. This is because people can easily lose track of how much they've consumed. Additionally, drinking high-proof alcohol (e.g. vodka, tequila, whiskey, etc.) with a mixer or something sweet can increase the likelihood of someone becoming intoxicated quickly.

Drugging often results in sudden changes in how a person feels or behaves. These symptoms typically occur quickly even when someone has consumed very little or no alcohol.

Signs of drugging to watch for:

- Sudden onset of feeling drunk after having consumed very little or no [alcohol](#)
- Sudden difficulty breathing
- Sudden dizziness, disorientation or blurred vision
- Sudden nausea
- Sudden body temperature that may result in sweating or teeth chattering
- Waking up with no memory or missing large portions of memory

5. What should you do if you believe someone has been drugged?

If you notice any of the symptoms listed above in yourself or someone else, find a trusted person immediately. Friends and bystanders are particularly important in situations when someone is vulnerable due to their level of intoxication, or if a person has been intentional incapacitated by drugs in an attempt to facilitate sexual assault or other crimes. Impaired and incapacitated people are unable to advocate for and protect themselves.

6. How can you preserve evidence?

If you or someone you know suspects that they have been drugged, steps can be taken to preserve evidence for a possible investigation. Many of these drugs leave the body quickly (typically within 12 to 72 hours). If someone can't go to the hospital immediately, they can save their urine in a clean, sealable container as soon as possible and place it in the fridge or freezer.

Find support resources or a [medical center](#) that can provide [sexual assault](#) forensic exams (SANE) and test blood and urine for substances.

Provided by University of Colorado at Boulder

Citation: Things to know about drug-facilitated sexual assault (2023, March 15) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-03-drug-facilitated-sexual-assault.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--