

Nic's story

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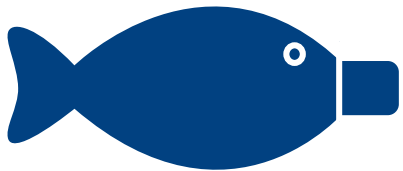
I've used a lot of different drugs, but G is the only one that's put me in the hospital.

It's always been around I guess and some of my friends love it, but I only ever seem to use it when I'm already a bit messed up. I guess it's a combination of it being available and me looking for something to take the edge off when I've been up for a while.

It usually means I'm not that careful when I use it. I just take whatever someone has given me, which has led to a couple of blowouts.

I still like my other drugs, but I'm thinking of giving G a miss from here on. Waking up in hospital is not a good way to end a night out.

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Contacts

If you want to talk to someone about your own or someone else's alcohol or other drug use, you can get more information from:

ReGen
1800 700 514 (Freecall)
contact@regen.org.au
www.regen.org.au

State-wide (Victoria):

DirectLine (24/7 service offering counselling, information and referral)
1800 888 236
www.directline.org.au

Department of Health Website
<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/alcohol-and-drugs>

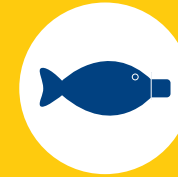
Support & information for drug users from other drug using peers:

Harm Reduction Victoria
(03) 9329 1500
www.hrvic.org.au

Support for family members or friends affected by a loved one's use:

Family Drug Help
1300 660 068
www.familydrughelp.org.au

Thanks to ReGen's Consumer Consultants and Harm Reduction Victoria for their contributions to the development of ReGen's drug information leaflets.



GHB

Facts

about

Facts about GHB

GHB (or sometimes just G) is the common abbreviation of gamma hydroxybutyrate, which has been used in the past as a general anaesthetic or as a treatment for narcolepsy (a sleeping disorder).

It is usually purchased as a clear (or sometimes blue) liquid, in small bottles or containers. There are a range of related substances (such as GBL) that are often sold as GHB, but which are converted into GHB once consumed.

GHB is a depressant: like alcohol, opioids and benzos. It slows down the messages going to and from your brain. As its short term effects can include feelings of euphoria, lowered inhibitions (helping people feel more socially confident) and increased sex drive, GHB is often used recreationally, including in combination with methamphetamine or other drugs. It is also used by people seeking to ease the comedown after periods of using stimulants.

As result of such patterns of polydrug use, GHB is becoming an increasingly common issue amongst people seeking treatment for alcohol and other drug dependence.

The positive effects of using GHB are associated with smaller doses. The higher the dose, the greater the likelihood that you will experience sedation, rather than a high. The higher the dose, the greater the risk of an overdose.

As with any drug, the more you use or the more you mix it with other drug types, the greater the potential risks to your health and wellbeing. We don't know much about the long term effects of using GHB, but there are some very real risks with its immediate effects.

One thing we do know is that GHB and alcohol appear to be a particularly risky combination for overdose.

Reducing the harms

Watch out for overdose

You have probably seen media coverage of GHB overdoses at nightclubs, raves or festivals. This (usually) isn't a media beat up, but an indicator of the very real overdose risk associated with GHB. As it's a depressant (like alcohol, benzos or heroin), a GHB overdose can result in someone losing consciousness and stopping breathing. Using different depressants together increases overdose risk.

If you see someone who may be overdosing, don't leave them leave them in a corner or let them 'sleep it off'. Keep a close eye on them. If they are unresponsive or appear to be in any distress, put them in the recovery position and call an ambulance.

Don't try to treat a GHB overdose with stimulants (like methamphetamine). Call the paramedics and let them do their job.

Be careful with dosage

The difference between a safe dose and an overdose is particularly small for this drug. It's why 'blowouts' on GHB are so common.

The strength can vary so, if you are using it, start with a low dose and wait at least 20 minutes to get a sense of how it is affecting you.

Be cautious when using a new supply and try to stick to consistent doses. Be as precise as you can. Don't just take a swig from the bottle.

Remember too that a dose can last for 3-4 hours. Be careful about taking a top-up dose when the last one may not have yet worn off.

Drink spiking

Because it's usually a clear liquid and because taking it can lead to confusion, lack of co-ordination and memory loss, GHB is sometimes used for drink spiking and sexual assault.

As with usual alcohol harm reduction, always keep an eye on your drink and be wary of drinks offered to you by other people.

Methods of use

A small proportion of people choose to inject GHB. Follow standard safe injecting practices (e.g. use sterile equipment, a fresh needle every time) and don't inject alone. Remember, a GHB overdose will occur much more quickly when injecting, as opposed to swallowing.

Plan ahead

If you're planning to use in a public place, think about who you'll be with and who you can trust to help you if things go wrong. If it's in private, who will be there to keep an eye on you.

Think about what other drugs you're likely to be using. Other depressants will increase your risk of overdose. Stimulants may mask some of the effects of GHB and make it harder for you to assess the effect it is having on your body.

How are getting home? As with other drugs, GHB will affect your capacity to drive safely.

Getting help if you need it

If you notice emerging problems with your health, relationships or other important parts of your life that you think may be related to your GHB (or other drug) use, there are a number of places you can get help – there's a list of useful numbers on the back of this leaflet.

