

Detection of Rape Drugs

- ~ Rape drugs are quickly processed out of our bodies. This means that testing as quickly as possible after the consumption of drugs is best.
- ~ After 72 hours, detection will be impossible. This time frame also depends on the drug that was used. Some drugs can be untraceable in only 12 hours.
- ~ Some rape drugs can be detected through a urine sample test, but others can only be detected through a blood test.
- ~ Testing for rape drugs can be difficult, as there are many drugs that may cause similar effects.

Options In Sexual Assault Situations

Talk to Someone. Talking to a friend or another support person may be helpful. The Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton has a **24-hour Sexual Assault Crisis Line** (780-423-4121) that provides confidential information and support to both those who have been sexually assaulted, as well as people looking for information and referrals.

Medical Attention. If someone has experienced unwanted sexual contact, they should consider seeking medical attention to treat wounds and to test for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and/or pregnancy, if this is a concern. A physical exam after a sexual assault can be difficult. Fortunately, there are many options and services in Edmonton that make the process less difficult:

SART (Sexual Assault Response Team): A team of nurses who examine and treat survivors age 14 and over (of any gender) who have been sexually assaulted within the last 7 days. (This includes those who think they were assaulted, but cannot remember because of drugs or alcohol.) Services can be accessed at any time through any hospital emergency department in the greater Edmonton area.

STD Clinic: The STD Clinic in Edmonton provides free, confidential, and anonymous sexually transmitted disease testing. For information on hours and location, call 780-413-5156.

Reporting to the Police: A survivor may choose to report to the police. An officer will be dispatched to take the report. A survivor can also go to their local police station and report in person. There is no time limit on reporting a sexual assault to the police.

1 Although "they" is typically used as a plural pronoun, it is also used as a singular, gender-neutral pronoun in this pamphlet
 2 Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, "Briefing," November 2003



The Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton is a not-for-profit organization funded by the United Way of the Alberta Capital Region, City of Edmonton Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), Alberta Provincial Government, service clubs, foundations, and private donations.

Registered under the Societies Act of Alberta since 1975.

Donations gratefully accepted.

A registered charitable organization.
 Charitable number: 107971772 RP0001



Business line: **780/423-4102**
 T.T.Y. (Telephone Device for the Deaf) line:
 780-420-1482
 fax: 780-421-8734
 info@sace.ab.ca

24 hour crisis line: 780-423-4121
www.sace.ab.ca



Updated October '10



**rape
 drugs**
 (drug facilitated
 sexual assault)



- ~ providing crisis intervention
- ~ public education
- ~ counselling

www.sace.ab.ca

What Are Rape Drugs?

"Rape drugs" are substances offenders use to incapacitate the people they assault. Some examples include rohypnol (a sedative), GHB (central nervous system depressant), ketamine (animal tranquilizer), ecstasy, or any other substance which is used to impair someone.

However, the most common and prevalent rape drug is alcohol. The use of alcohol as a rape drug sometimes surprises people, as it is a readily available, legal substance that many people do not think of as threatening.

People who sexually assault others may use alcohol to intoxicate their intended victim because it is a socially acceptable drug that is readily available. They may take advantage of someone who is already drinking, or they may be actively involved in getting someone drunk by pressuring someone to drink more alcohol at a faster pace than they feel comfortable with. Perpetrators also may double pour drinks, making people more intoxicated than they should be for the number of drinks they thought they had consumed.

While it is common for survivors who have been drugged to blame themselves for what happened, the only person to blame is the perpetrator of the assault. The Criminal Code of Canada (Section 271.3) clearly outlines that **consent for sexual activity cannot be obtained when an individual is incapable of consenting** (i.e. incapacitated - impaired by alcohol or drugs).

Experiencing Rape Drugs

Survivors often blame themselves, thinking that because they "got drunk," they "let things get out of control," or "put themselves in a risky situation." While feeling responsible is common, **the only person to blame is the perpetrator of the assault.** This can be difficult to grasp because it is true that we are responsible for our own actions. However, we cannot be responsible for the actions of others. Sexual assault is a unilateral act - that is, it happens when one person violates another. What the survivor did or didn't do doesn't matter.

In terms of physical responses, some people who experience drug facilitated sexual assault report suddenly feeling strangely lightheaded and very drunk. Sometimes, the "drunk" feeling includes a change in vision, or loss of physical control (feeling "out of it"). Survivors may also wake up drowsy, confused, weak, or have impaired motor skills with little to no memory of what happened.

Many survivors report feeling confused and disorientated both during and after being given a drug. In some cases, survivors have no memory of anything that happened. When they start to remember, they may describe feeling paralyzed, powerless, or separated from their bodies.

The loss of memory during a sexual assault can be very frightening. Survivors may question if they were sexually assaulted, wonder who assaulted them, or how many perpetrators were involved. All of these uncertainties can affect how someone heals after a sexual assault involving rape drugs.

Indications of a Sexual Assault

Since survivors may have little or no memory of what happened, the following are some indications that a drug facilitated sexual assault **may** have occurred:

- ~ Waking up in a strange location
- ~ Waking up with clothes missing or put on differently
- ~ Soreness in the genital or anal areas
- ~ Physical indications such as marks or bruises on the skin
- ~ Abnormal discharge
- ~ A sense that something just isn't right

Rape Drug Myths

There are many myths about rape drugs which blame survivors for the assault and excuse the perpetrator's behaviour. The following are some myths we hear at the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton.

Myth: People only get drugged at parties or when they go out to bars and nightclubs.

Fact: Rape drugs can be used anywhere. We have seen cases where rape drugs were used at coffee shops, house parties, restaurants, churches, camping trips, and at home with their partner. Perpetrators of sexual violence may use alcohol or other drugs to incapacitate their victims.

Myth: It's usually strangers who put drugs in victims' drinks.

Fact: The stereotypical rape drug scenario involves a stranger slipping a drug in someone's drink at a bar when they aren't looking. However, it is far more common that the survivor will know the person who drugged them (friend, date, partner, acquaintance, etc.). Approximately 85% of sexual assaults are committed by someone the survivor knows.

Myth: When someone is drugged, they are somewhat responsible because they weren't being careful enough.

Fact: People are drugged because a perpetrator chooses to drug them. It has nothing to do with what the survivor did or didn't do. This means that how "careful" a person is at a party, at a bar, on a camping trip, or at home in the company of family or a few friends, doesn't matter. The key factor in sexual assault is the perpetrator's behaviour, not the survivor's.

Myth: If a person accepts a drink from someone else, they are somewhat obligated to have sex.

Fact: Consenting to a drink is just that: consenting to a drink. It is NOT the same as consenting to sex.

Myth: If both people were drunk, the perpetrator can't be blamed for what happened.

Fact: People are always responsible for their own actions, even if they are drunk. For example, if someone drinks and drives, they cannot use being drunk as an excuse for not thinking clearly enough to use another form of transportation!

Some people believe that alcohol may "make" people do things they would otherwise never dream of doing. For example, we may sometimes hear that the offender is generally a very nice person and would never do something like this if it wasn't for the alcohol involved. However, research suggests that alcohol acts as a "social lubricant" rather than a "personality changer". That is, people knowingly drink to give themselves "liquid courage" to do things they otherwise would not do sober. Many perpetrators get drunk to give them the "courage" to assault someone.²