

The Truth About Club Drugs

Slang--Ecstasy: E, X, XTC.

GHB: Liquid Ecstasy, Liquid X, Grievous Bodily Harm, Georgia Home Boy.

Ketamine: K, Special K, Ket, Vitamin K, Kit Kat.

Rohypnol: Roofies, R-2.

Club drugs affect your brain. The term “club drugs” refers to a wide variety of drugs often used at all-night dance parties (“raves”), nightclubs, and concerts. Club drugs can damage the neurons in your brain, impairing your senses, memory, judgment, and coordination.

Club drugs affect your body. Different club drugs have different effects on your body. Some common effects include loss of muscle and motor control, blurred vision, and seizures. Club drugs like ecstasy are stimulants that increase your heart rate and blood pressure and can lead to heart or kidney failure. Other club drugs, like GHB, are depressants that can cause drowsiness, unconsciousness, or breathing problems.

Club drugs affect your self-control. Club drugs like GHB and Rohypnol are used in “date rape” and other assaults because they are sedatives that can make you unconscious and immobilize you. Rohypnol can cause a kind of amnesia—users may not remember what they said or did while under the effects of the drug, making it easier for others to take advantage of them.

Club drugs are not always what they seem. Because club drugs are illegal and often produced in makeshift laboratories, it is impossible to know exactly what chemicals were used to produce them and where they came from. How strong or dangerous any illegal drug is varies each time.

Club drugs can kill you. Higher doses of club drugs can cause severe breathing problems, coma, or even death.

Know the law. It is illegal to buy or sell club drugs. It is also a federal crime to use any controlled substance to aid in a sexual assault.

Get the facts. Despite what you may have heard, club drugs can be addictive.

Stay informed. The club drug scene is constantly changing. New drugs and new variations of drugs appear all of the time.

Know the risks. Mixing club drugs together or with alcohol is extremely dangerous. The effects of one drug can magnify the effects and risks of another. In fact, mixing substances can be lethal.

Look around you. The vast majority of teens are not using club drugs. While ecstasy is considered to be the most frequently used club drug, less than 2 percent of 8th – 12th graders use it on a regular basis. In fact, 94 percent of teens have never even *tried* ecstasy.(1)

How can you tell if a friend is using club drugs? Sometimes it's tough to tell. But there are signs you can look for. If your friend has one or more of the following warning signs, he or she may be using club drugs:

- Problems remembering things they recently said or did
- Loss of coordination, dizziness, fainting
- Depression
- Confusion
- Sleep problems
- Chills or sweating
- Slurred speech

What can you do to help someone who is using club drugs? Be a real friend. Save a life. Encourage your friend to stop or seek professional help. For information and referrals, call the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 800-729-6686. In the Phoenix metropolitan area call ASAP, the Adolescent Substance Abuse Program, at (602) 953-2727.

Q. If you were in a club and somebody slipped a club drug into your drink, wouldn't you realize it immediately?

A. Probably not. Most club drugs are odorless and tasteless. Some are made into a powder form that makes it easier to slip into a drink and dissolve without a person's knowledge. That is why some of these drugs have been called "date rape" drugs—because there have been increasing reports of club drugs being used in sexual assaults.

Q. Are there any long-term effects of taking ecstasy?

A. Yes. Studies on both humans and animals have proven that regular use of ecstasy produces long-lasting, perhaps permanent damage to the brain's ability to think and store memories.

Q. If you took a club drug at a rave, wouldn't you just dance off all of its effects?

A. Not necessarily. The stimulant effects of drugs like ecstasy that allow the user to dance for long periods of time, combined with the hot, crowded conditions usually found at raves, can lead to extreme dehydration and even heart or kidney failure. In addition, some of ecstasy's effects, like confusion, depression, anxiety, paranoia, and sleep problems, have been reported to occur even weeks after the drug is taken.

The bottom line: If you know someone who uses club drugs, urge him or her to get help. If you're using them—stop!

The longer you ignore the real facts, the more chances you take with your life.

It's never too late. Talk to your parents, a doctor, a counselor, a teacher, or another adult you trust.

Do it today!

Footnotes

1. Monitoring the Future Study. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), 1999.