

GHB : gay men, sex and drugs / Terrence Higgins Trust.

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Gay men, sex and drugs

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WHAT'S THE SCORE?

GHB and GBL are also known as: GBH, Grievous bodily harm, Gina, G or liquid ecstasy.

GHB (Gamma Hydroxy Butyrate) and GBL (Gamma Butyrolactone) are chemicals used in dance clubs or during sex. They're depressant drugs ('downers'), which means they slow your body and its functions down.

Both types of G have industrial solvent and paint stripper-type chemicals in them.

Because GBL turns into GHB inside the body, the effects of GBL can be stronger or more unpredictable than when taking GHB.

As the law on GHB has tightened, GBL has largely taken over from it on the scene.

TAKING G

GHB and GBL come as a clear, salty liquid with no smell that's mixed with a soft drink (never alcohol). Sometimes it comes as a powder that's added to a drink.

The strength of G varies a lot so it's hard to know what a safe dose is.

Doses are often measured with eye drops, small syringes or by the capful. Some people take half a capful, wait up to an hour and if nothing happens they take another half a capful. Regular users might be able to tolerate more of the drug and tend to take one capful every 1-2 hours.

HIGHS AND LOWS

With G the high comes on after about 20 minutes, lasts about one hour but may last up to four hours.

A dose of G can make you feel chilled out, horny or mildly high. It's often used to boost the effect of other chems like E.

Too much G leaves you dizzy, drowsy or vomiting - which could cause death from choking if G has knocked you out. The worst case scenarios with G are seizures, coma and death.

A little 'Gina' goes a long way, with not much difference (maybe only a millilitre or so) between the dose that gets you high and one that has you hitting the floor. Overdosing is easy to do and comes on with little warning. The list of party goers killed by G is growing.



Overdoses tend to happen when people take a second dose before the first kicks in - or the G is stronger than expected. Or they've been drinking alcohol.

A LONG TERM RELATIONSHIP?

Regular users often build up a tolerance to G, needing more to get the same buzz. Some get dependent on it. Withdrawal symptoms include the shakes and heavy duty anxiety attacks.

G WITH OTHER DRUGS

Depressants - it's very risky to mix G with other depressant drugs (downers) like alcohol and tranquilisers - but also ketamine or antihistamines (used in allergy medicines). Their combined action can dangerously slow down your breathing or cause a long 'G sleep' - which isn't sleep at all, but unconsciousness. A fit, coma or death are possible. Even drinking booze a few hours earlier can leave enough in your system to risk a collapse.

HIV drugs - G can also interact with HIV meds, causing dangerously high levels of G and a bigger risk of collapsing.

USEFUL TO KNOW

If someone's getting drowsy from GHB/GBL, don't let them fall into a 'G-sleep' - they're not 'sleeping', they're unconscious and may not wake up. Try to keep them awake and moving until the effects wear off or medical help arrives.

If G knocks someone out, to stop them choking on their own vomit they should be laid on their side (not on their back).

If you or friends aren't feeling well or can't be woken up, get medical help straight away. There's always a risk of sudden death if someone's unconscious. You'll be in a lot more trouble if you don't get help ... and then find yourself with a dead body on your hands.

G should definitely be avoided if you have high or low blood pressure, epilepsy, convulsions or heart or breathing problems.

With no colour, smell and only a light salty taste that can be masked in drinks, G has been used as a date rape drug. So it's best not to leave drinks unwatched. Be wary of taking drinks from strangers.

THE LAW

GHB is a Class C drug.

Possession can mean up to two years in prison and/or an unlimited fine. Intending to supply (including giving it to mates) can mean up to 14 years and/or an unlimited fine.

GBL is currently not illegal in the UK.

SEX ON G

The drug has a reputation for making people horny. Its relaxing effect can be used to help take things up the arse.

Less welcome is how it can make it harder to come or how it can lower your inhibitions, making unsafe sex more likely – and with it passing on HIV, syphilis, herpes, gonorrhoea, etc.

But if you're a bit out of it – or totally dead to the world – it'll be hard to control what's happening or even remember it when (or if) you come round.



MORE INFO

If you'd like to talk to someone with lots of experience of drug-related issues, there's:

One-2-One counselling with a drugs counsellor at **Terrence Higgins Trust's** London offices. It's free of charge and to see if this would be useful for you, call our **Wellbeing Service** on **0207 812 1777**.

Or you can ask one of the **LADS** outreach team (identifiable in venues and cruising areas by their LADS stand, t-shirts and ID badges) about speaking to our drugs worker.

Also, check out www.tht.org.uk / **DRUG F*CKED**

Antidote

A London service gay and bisexual men concerned about their alcohol or drug use can make use of, with weekly drop-in, one-to-one counselling, support groups and more. Call **020 7287 8743** or go to www.thehungerford.org/antidote.asp

Talk To Frank

Information and support around alcohol and drug use. Call the 24 hour helpline on **0800 77 66 00** or contact by email, details from their website. Also, check out the 'need help' section of the site, www.talktofrank.com