

Saskatoon Sexual Assault & Information Centre (SSAIC)



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www.ssaic.ca

Alcohol/Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assault

What is alcohol/drug-facilitated sexual assault?

Perpetrators of sexual violence often use drugs or alcohol to make their victims more vulnerable. These substances inhibit the victim's ability to resist and may even impair memory so that the victim cannot identify the perpetrator or even remember the assault.

You may have heard the term "date rape drugs"; this term is misleading because it implies that they are used only in the context of dating, but alcohol/drug-facilitated sexual assault does not only happen to a person who is on a date. These substances are often used at parties or in bars, sometimes by a stranger but more often by someone known to the victim.

How does a perpetrator use drugs and alcohol?

There are two ways:

1. The perpetrator takes advantage of a victim's voluntary use of alcohol or drugs because they know this makes them more vulnerable
2. The perpetrator intentionally forces a victim to consume drugs without their knowledge

Alcohol is the most commonly used substance in drug-facilitated sexual assault.

Prescription drugs like sleep aids, anxiety medication, muscle relaxers, and tranquilizers may also be used by the perpetrators.

Street drugs like GHB, rohypnol, ecstasy, and ketamine can be added to drinks without changing the colour, flavour, or odour of a beverage.

How will I know if I've been drugged?

Depending on the substance, the initial effects of a drug can go unnoticed (especially if given together with alcohol) or become apparent very quickly.

- Difficulty breathing
- Feeling drunk when you haven't consumed alcohol or have had only a small amount
- Sudden increase in dizziness, disorientation, or blurred vision
- Sudden body temperature change (sweating or chills)
- Nausea

- Loss of bowel or bladder control

If you notice any of these warning signs, or you just aren't feeling well, seek help immediately—and be mindful that the predator is hoping to catch you alone, so find a trusted friend or a bartender/server. **Do NOT** go to the bathroom or outside for some fresh air alone; this is when the perpetrator is likely to take advantage of you.

If you notice these signs in someone else, take steps to keep that person safe and do not leave them alone.

Indications of Sexual Assault

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

- Waking up in a strange location and not knowing how you got there
- Flashes of memory of “coming to” but being unable to move, then losing consciousness
- Waking up with clothes missing or put on differently
- Soreness in the genital or anal areas
- Physical indications such as marks or bruises
- Abnormal discharge
- Loss of memory for a whole part of an evening or day
- A sense that something wrong happened or that something “isn't right”
- If you have memories of sexual activity but you feel paralyzed or disconnected from your body

Preserving Evidence

If you believe you were drugged, you can take steps to preserve the evidence for an investigation. Many of these drugs leave the body quickly—within 12 to 72 hours—so if you can't get to the hospital immediately, do not shower, eat or drink, or change clothes. Call the 24-hour Crisis Line (306-244-2224) for immediate assistance. Our volunteers can answer questions about getting the forensic exam (rape kit) completed at the hospital and discuss your options for police reporting.

If I'm drinking or drugging and am sexually assaulted, is it my fault?

NO! Many victims of drug-facilitated sexual assault believe that they “deserved it”, feel guilty, and blame themselves. Remember: someone took advantage of you, and that is NOT your fault. You are allowed to party, flirt, drink, and dress as you please. No one is ever “asking” to be sexually assaulted—these actions do not imply consent.

The Criminal Code of Canada (Section 271.3) clearly states that consent for sexual activity cannot be obtained when an individual is incapable of consenting (i.e. incapacitated or impaired by alcohol or drugs).