

What it looks like

GHB is a clear, odourless liquid, that tastes slightly salty. It comes in small bottles or sometimes as a powder or a capsule.

How it's taken

GHB is usually swallowed as liquid or capsules. A powdery form can be mixed with water, milk or juice. It is sometimes injected, which is more risky.

What it does

GHB varies greatly in strength. At low doses, it has an uplifting effect. As more is taken, it acts like a sedative or downer and makes you feel sleepy.

Addiction

There's limited evidence from services in Scotland that GHB can cause dependency and addiction, which is very hard to manage. Sometimes frequent doses may be needed to avoid withdrawal symptoms. Being psychologically dependent could be an issue in some cases.



How long the effects last

The effects start between 10 minutes and one hour after taking it and can last up to a whole day.

Risks

GHB can cause major problems such as burning of the inside of the mouth and throat.

GHB has been linked to 'date rape' when mixed with alcohol.

Larger doses can cause drowsiness, sickness, disorientation, convulsions, breathing difficulties, unconsciousness, seizures, vomiting and stiff muscles. It can also lead to a coma, and if you're sick while unconscious, you can choke on your vomit.

Coma and choking are more likely if the drug is used with alcohol and other depressants, such as painkillers or tranquillisers. An overdose can kill the user.

Withdrawal symptoms can be very serious and even life-threatening, with seizures and convulsions.

At this time we do not fully understand the long-term effects.

What to do in an emergency

Don't delay – phone 999 immediately.

If you think someone has overdosed on drugs, tell the operator what drugs they've taken (if you know).

What not to do

- Don't cause pain or another injury.
- Don't give them other drugs.
- Don't put them in a shower or bath.
- Don't walk them around.
- Don't leave them on their own.

Always follow the operator's instruction.

And remember, if you have any doubt always call 999. It could save the person's life.

What the law says

GHB is a classified drug.

For the current classification and information about the consequences of using and supplying GHB, go to www.knowthescore.info.

Fact: by law, passing drugs to someone else, including friends, is classed as supplying.

Fact: some countries may refuse visas to people who have drug convictions.

Getting more information

Phone the free and confidential 'Know the Score' information line on **0800 587 5879**, to speak to a trained advisor. Someone is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Calls from landlines are free and will not show up on the phone bill. Or, you can visit the 'Know the Score' website at www.knowthescore.info.

Both the information line and the website can provide information about local services. Also, you can ask your GP to refer you to a specialist drugs service. To find a drug service in your area visit www.scottishdrugservices.com.

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