

ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE TOO OFTEN GO TOGETHER

MAKE THE LEAP: LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND THE USE OF ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

The use of alcohol and drugs does not cause sexual violence but it does play a part. Over half of sexual assaults of young adults involve drugs and/or alcohol.¹ A person who is drunk or high is unable to give consent.

When someone purposely uses alcohol and/or drugs to make another person drunk or high so that they won't say 'no' to sex, it is called "drug-facilitated sexual assault".

Most often, alcohol is the 'drug' that is used. There are "date rape drugs" such as Rohypnol.² A person intent on having sex may also target someone who is already drunk. Drugs that are used for the purpose of sexual assault include antidepressants and tranquilizers. These can only be bought with a prescription but others such as motion sickness drugs are available over the counter at drug stores. Drugs like marijuana, crack, cocaine and ecstasy may also be used.

A victim who has been drugged can lose consciousness. They may wake up the next day and not remember what happened. This can cause confusion so that they are unsure about seeking help. As a result, the time to collect any evidence related to testing for drugs may pass. If the person showers, the water cleans off the evidence of the person who assaulted them. If this happens to you – call your local sexual assault centre for support and to talk about what to do as soon as possible.

HOW TO KEEP YOURSELF AND YOUR FRIENDS SAFE³

- Keep an eye on your friends – ask them to do the same for you.
- Know what you're drinking – avoid large batch drinks where you don't know what's in it.
- Don't leave your drink alone – even when you use the bathroom or go dancing.
- Don't accept drinks from people you don't know.
- Be aware of sudden changes in the way your body feels – tell a friend and ask them to take to a safe place. If you think your friend has been drugged, call 911 and be upfront with the doctors so they can do the right testing.
- Trust your instincts, if you feel unsafe or uncomfortable don't ignore it.

There is a double standard: while alcohol consumption is sometimes used to excuse the abusive person's behaviour, it is also often used as a reason to blame the victim for the abuse.

— Canadian Women's Foundation

¹ Antonia, A. et al., (2001) "Alcohol and Sexual Assault," Alcohol Research and Health: The Journal of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

² Du Mont, J. et al., (2009) Factors Associated with suspected drug-facilitated sexual assault. Canadian Medical Association Journal.

³ RAINN: Alcohol Safety: <https://www.rainn.org/articles/alcohol-safety>