Positive Choices
Drug and Alcohol Information
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Factsheet

Drink spiking



Evidence ratings:

This resource has undergone expert review. See our Help/Q&A section for more details.

Year:

Targeted Drugs: Alcohol, Drugs (General)

Tags: drink spiking, roofied, teenagers, parents

Origin: Australian

Cost:
Free

What is drink spiking?

When someone adds alcohol or another drug to a person's drink, without their knowledge or consent, then the drink is "spiked". Research has found that adding extra alcohol to someone's drink is the most common form of drink spiking. Reasons for why someone may spike another person's drink include: to have 'fun' or play a joke, to cause harm, or to sexually assault someone.

Regardless of the reason, drink spiking can cause serious harm to the victim.

"[I'm] particularly concerned about drink spiking."
-Mother of a 13- and 15-year-old

Symptoms of drink spiking

The symptoms that someone may display after consuming a spiked drink include:

- Feeling nauseous.
- Feeling drowsy (tired), dizzy, and/or faint.
- Feeling drunk (feeling 'out of it') after consuming only a few sips of alcohol.
- Passing out or blacking out.
- Waking up feeling confused with little to no memory of the events from the previous day.

In case of drink spiking, call 000 and ask for ambulance assistance. While waiting, the affected person should drink bottled water, and inform a friend or venue management about what has happened.

How to avoid drink spiking

Whether drinking in public or at someone's house, there are several strategies that young people can use to avoid drink spiking. Remember that both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks can be spiked, so it may be worth highlighting these risks to your teenager even if they're not drinking alcohol.

- If your teenager sees someone spiking a drink, they can call them out and/or tell the intended victim what they saw and report this to staff or adults at the venue.
- If they're around people who are joking about spiking someone's drink, encourage them to speak up and tell them it's not funny and it can cause serious harm.
- You can recommend they inform an adult or venue management immediately if they notice suspicious behaviour.
- Tell your teenager to not accept drinks from strangers.
- Advise them to not leave drinks unattended. If they need to use the bathroom or leave their drink for some reason, get them to leave it with a trusted friend or discard it and only drink from a new one.
- Tell your teenager to buy their own drinks and watch as they are being poured.
- Encourage them to not taste or drink another person's drink.
- Remind them that if their drink tastes different or odd, throw it away.

The tips above can be useful during an open and calm conversation with your teenager about drink spiking and your concerns about their safety. Below are some strategies that may be helpful when talking to young people about sensitive issues such as drink spiking.

Discussing drink spiking with your teenager

A good way to start the discussion is to find out what your teenager already knows about drink spiking, and any strategies they have for staying safe. It may be helpful to bring up the topic by referencing a film, tv show, or stories about drink spiking in the news.





- You can begin by discussing the issue of drink spiking in the context of the film/show/news story and then talk about how it may apply to your teenager's activities specifically.
- Take the opportunity to address fears or concerns, and correct any misinformation your teenager may have.
- Talk about what could be learnt from the way the situation was handled by the characters or people in the show or news story, and ask your teenager what they would do differently.
- During these conversations it's important to **actively listen** to your teenager. Listen consciously to their perspective, reflect back that you are trying to understand, and ask questions to check your understanding.
- Calmly provide your perspective and together discuss what your teenager can do to minimise the risks you're both concerned about.

For further information on communicating with your teen, please see our factsheet on talking to a young person about alcohol and other drugs.

Evidence Base

This factsheet was developed following expert review by researchers at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney. A full list of sources which informed this factsheet can be seen below.

Sources

1. Swan, S.C., et al., *Just a dare or unaware? Outcomes and motives of drugging ("drink spiking") among students at three college campuses.*Psychology of violence, 2017. 7(2): p. 253.
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5. Fischer, J.A., et al., *Development of guidelines for adults on how to communicate with adolescents about mental health problems and other sensitive topics: a Delphi study.* SAGE Open, 2013. 3(4): p. 2158244013516769.
6. Welsh, C., *Harry Potter and the Underage Drinkers: Can We Use This to Talk to Teens about Alcohol?*Journal of Child & Adolescent Substance Abuse, 2007. 16(4): p. 119-126.

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