Drugs a-to-z

GHB: Factsheet

Evidence ratings:

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

Year: Year 9–10, Year 11–12

Targeted Drugs: GHB

Tags: fantasy, grievous bodily harm, GBH, liquid ecstasy, Gina

Time Allocated: Partial lesson (under 45mins)

Origin: Australian

Cost:
Free

What is GHB?

GHB is also known as fantasy, grievous bodily harm, GBH, liquid ecstasy, liquid E, G, or Gina.

GHB is short for gamma-hydroxybutyrate and it is naturally produced in small amounts by the body. It is almost always sold as a clear or blue liquid that doesn't have a smell. It comes in a little vial such as a fish-shaped sushi soy sauce container and it is normally swallowed. Problems with safety, including concerns about its use as a date rape drug, have led to it being classified as an illegal drug.

Sometimes other substances called GBL and 1,4B are sold as GHB because they have similar effects but may be stronger or more toxic. This increases the change of an overdose.

Although it is sometimes referred to as liquid ecstasy or liquid E, it is not related to ecstasy at all.

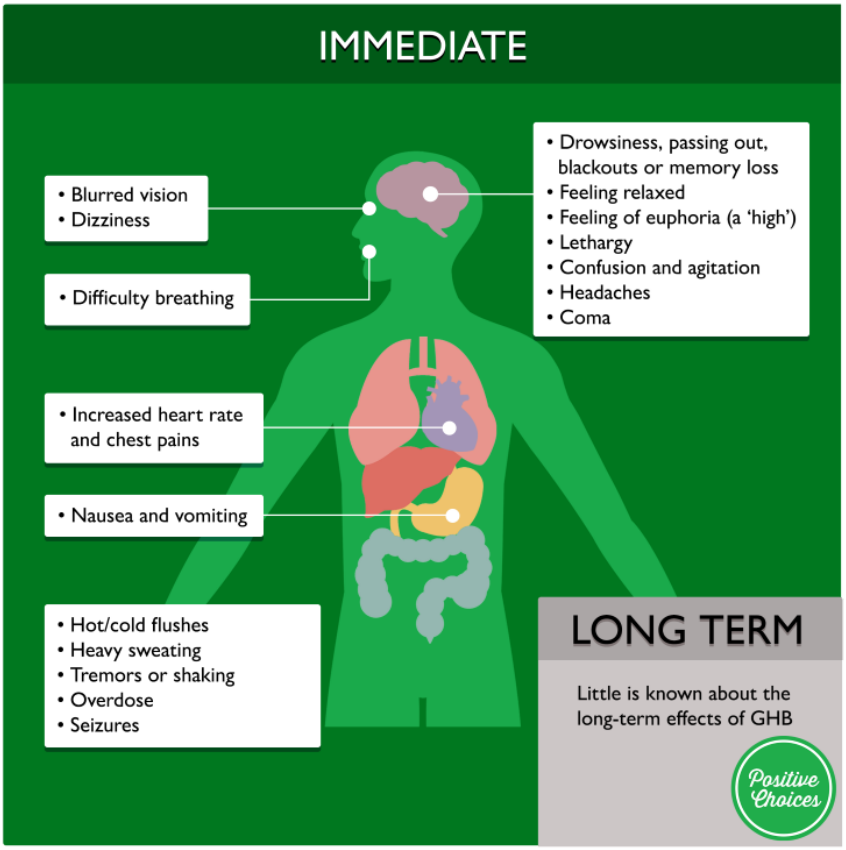
There's a very high risk of overdosing with GHB. There's very little difference between the amount that causes the 'high' and the amount that causes an overdose.

What are the effects of GHB?

Once swallowed, GHB takes around 15–30 minutes to take effect and the effects last for about half an hour.

The effects of GHB vary but include those listed in the table below.

Immediate	Long-term
Increased heart rate and chest pains	*Little is known about the long-term effects of GHB*
Drowsiness, passing out, blackouts or memory loss	
Blurred vision	
Feeling relaxed	
Feeling of euphoria (a 'high')	
Lethargy	
Hot/cold flushes	
Heavy sweating	
Confusion and agitation	
Nausea and vomiting	
Headaches and dizziness	
Tremors or shaking	
Difficulty breathing	
Overdose	
Seizures	
Coma	



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, the National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, and the National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University.

Sources

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