

# GHB



# HARM REDUCTION BOOKLET



# What is GHB?

GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) is a depressant drug, which slows down signals between the brain and body, and has similar effects to alcohol. Overdose can lead to amnesia, blackouts and unconsciousness, slowed or stopped breathing, slowed or stopped heartbeat, and death.

GHB is usually sold as a liquid in small bottles, vials, or 'fishies' but is also sold in crystal or powder form.

GBL (Gammabutyrolactone) and BD (1,4-BD or 1,4-butanediol) are precursors of GHB and rapidly convert to GHB once in the body. GBL and BD are often sold as GHB in Australia. GHB, GBL and BD are colourless and odourless, with a bitter or salty taste. GBL is stronger than GHB, increasing the risk of accidental overdose.



Because GHB may be homemade or come from industrial sources, and because what is sold as GHB may actually be GBL or BD, different batches can vary in strength, how quickly you will feel the effects ('onset time') and how long they will last ('duration').

# Effects of GHB

GHB is also known as Fanta, Fantasy, G, GBH (Grievous Bodily Harm), Liquid E or Liquid X. GHB causes similar effects to alcohol but affects everyone differently. This may depend on a number of factors including:

- The amount taken
- The strength of the drug (will vary from batch to batch)
- The size and weight of the person
- Interactions with any other substances that have been taken



## **Some things to note:**

How quickly you will feel the effects (onset time) can be anywhere between 15 to 90 mins

How long the effects last (duration) can vary from around 90 mins to 5 hours or more

# Short term effects

Low doses release dopamine (the “feel good” chemical”) but higher doses reduce dopamine release and lead to sedation. Effects depend largely on dose- the bigger the dose, the more likely GHB is to cause bad effects (in red).

- Euphoria
- Increased sexual arousal
- Lowered/loss of inhibitions
- Relaxation
- Happiness/joy
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Drowsiness
- Tremors
- Diarrhoea
- 'Jelly legs'
- Loss of co-ordination
- Blackouts
- Amnesia
- Bizarre behaviour
- Convulsions
- Unconsciousness
- Coma
- Death

# Long term effects

- Incontinence (urinary and bowel)
- Dependence (usually within 1-2 weeks of regular use)
- Low mood



# Dosages for oral ingestion

The difference between a dose that feels good and an overdose can be less than 0.1ml.

**Always measure how much you are using and start small.**

Batches can vary a lot.

There is no safe dose of GHB - always use a small amount first to see what the effect are before using more.

## Low dose

0.3 - 0.6mls may produce mild relaxation, increased sociability, decreased motor skills, and other effects similar to low doses of alcohol.

### Harm reduction tip

Measuring your dose in a syringe/barrel can help with accuracy.



## Medium dose

0.6 - 1.25mls may produce increased relaxation, positive mood changes, increased response to stimuli, loss of coordination, slurred speech, slight incoherence, nausea and grogginess.

## High dose

1.25 - 2mls may increase feelings of disequilibrium (unsteadiness) and agitation - at this dose, many people feel unwell. Increased slurring of speech, incoherence or grogginess, blackout and memory loss, slowed breathing and heart rate are common at this dose.

# Re-dosing

To reduce the risk of '**blowing out**' or '**dropping**' (blackouts, unconsciousness, coma):

- Allow for the onset time of your first dose before judging how strong it is.
- *Make sure you wait at least 90 minutes to 2 hours before taking a second dose (so that you know how strong the first dose was).*
- If you take a second dose within the duration (4 to 5 hours) of your first, measure it and make it smaller than the first. Doses are cumulative, building up so that each dose will have a stronger effect than the last. Taking the same amount again before the first dose has worn off **will have much more than twice the effect**.
- *A second dose should always be low, (no more than half of your previous dose).*



## Harm reduction tips

- Wait to feel the effects
- Second dose should be lower
- Set a timer on your phone or take a screen shot of the time you dose

# Mixing drugs

GHB can remain active in your system for up to five hours. Remember this if you are planning to use other drugs. Using GHB with alcohol can increase the depressant effects of GHB which could lead to unconsciousness and vomiting while unconscious which can lead to choking death. Alcohol slows the metabolism of GHB, making overdose more likely.

Using GHB at the same time as stimulant drugs like methamphetamine, cocaine or MDMA (ecstasy), can put the heart under a lot of strain and can be dangerous, leading to heart failure and death. Try to avoid using with other drugs.

## Harm reduction tip

If using opioids and GHB, always carry **naloxone** (the drug that reverses opioid overdose)



## Harm reduction tip

- Try to avoid using alcohol with GHB, GBL and 1,4BD.
- Always tell someone you're using and avoid using alone

Using GHB with any other depressant drugs like opioids or benzodiazepines, or dissociative drugs like nitrous or ketamine, can be **EXTREMELY** dangerous, causing slowed heart rate and breathing, which can lead to coma and death.



# Overdose

A GHB overdose occurs when a person has had too much and it slows down their heart rate and breathing and can lead to death.

If someone is experiencing an overdose it is a **medical emergency** and **000** needs to be called.

## Signs of an overdose

- Slowed or slurred speech
- Unconsciousness
- Slowed or irregular breathing
- Inability to stand
- Vomiting
- Incoherence
- Increased sweating



## If the person is conscious or able to be woken

- Keep them awake
- Keep checking for a response and breathing
- Ask them to sit down on the ground, continue to monitor b
- Clear a safe space in case the person makes sudden jerking movements.
- If the person is unconscious but breathing, put into the recovery position and continue to monitor.

If they are breathing normally, put the person in the recovery position and monitor their breathing. Wait with the person until help arrives and tell the paramedics what drugs they have taken. You won't get into trouble for calling an ambulance, they are there to help.

**D**

Check for **danger**

**R**

Check for a **response** (call their name, squeeze their shoulder, ask them to open their eyes)

**S**

**Send** for help, call 000 (this is a medical emergency)

**A**

Open their mouth and check their **airway** is clear and open. Tilt their head back to maintain an open airway.

**B**

Check for **breathing** (look, feel, listen for two normal breaths in 10 seconds)

**If the person is not breathing normally, or has stopped breathing**

**C**

Start **CPR** (30 compressions, two breaths)

**D**

If a **defibrillator** is available, use immediately and follow instructions

If the person starts breathing normally, place the person on their side in the recovery position and continue to monitor.

# Withdrawal

Dependence can happen within 1-2 weeks if using GHB regularly. Long term and high dose use can lead to incontinence of the bladder and bowel.

## Signs and symptoms

Signs and symptoms that someone is experiencing withdrawal from GHB may include:

- Confusion
- Shaking
- Seizures
- Coma
- Low mood

If a person is dependent and wants to stop using, withdrawal should be medically managed as sudden withdrawal can cause seizures and may be fatal without medical support.



### Harm reduction tip

If you want to talk to someone about your GHB use you can reach out to your local community alcohol and drug service or ring the ADSS for information and referrals



**Alcohol and  
Drug Support  
Service**

**1300 198 024  
(08) 9442 5000**

# GHB and Sex

GHB can increase sex drive and is commonly used during sex to enhance pleasure. GHB can make sex last longer and can help with muscle relaxation, which can make activities such as anal sex or fisting easier.

Using GHB during sex can also lower inhibitions, meaning we might feel more confident to do things we wouldn't normally and may affect your ability to consent or to negotiate the sex you want to have.

## Things to remember when having sex on G!

- **Bring extra condoms and lube** - with sex lasting longer, it can increase friction meaning you may be more prone to tears - multiple condoms and lube can help!
- **Make sure you talk about what you and your sexual partner are both ok with, what's going on and how much GHB you're happy to use.**
- **Consent can be withdrawn at anytime.**
- **Plan how much GHB you want to use.**
- **If you're hooking up with someone new, tell a friend where your going to meet.**



# Planning on using GHB?

## Here's some tips!



**Try a small amount first and wait to feel the effects (wait at least 90mins - 2 hours!)**

**Avoid mixing GHB with other substances - this can increase the risk of overdose.**

**Always use sterile injecting equipment - talk to your NSEP**

**If using with opioid substances, carry Naloxone!**

**Avoid using G alone, let someone know if you're planning on using.**

**Planning on having sex on G? Stock up on condoms and lube!**

**Talk to your sexual partners about what you are and aren't ok with. Remember consent can be withdrawn at any time.**

# Need Support?

## **Alcohol and Drug Support Service**

**Metro: (08) 9442 5000**

**Country: 1800 198 024**

## **Sexual Health Helpline**

**Metro: (08) 9227 6178**

**Country: 1800 198 205**

## **Peer Based Harm Reduction WA**

**Perth: (08) 9325 8387**

**South West: (08) 9791 6699**

## **Hepatitis WA**

**Metro: (08) 9328 8538**

**Country: 1800 800 070**

## **Health Direct**

**1800 022 222**

## **M Clinic - WAAC**

**(08) 9227 0734**







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