

Drug Fact Sheet



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GHB

Overview

Gamma-Hydroxybutyric acid (GHB) is another name for the generic drug sodium oxybate. Xyrem® (which is sodium oxybate) is the trade name of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved prescription medication. Analogues that are often substituted for GHB include GBL (gamma butyrolactone) and 1,4 BD (also called just BD), which is 1,4-butanediol.

Street names

Easy Lay, G, Georgia Home Boy, GHB, Goop, Grievous Bodily Harm, Liquid Ecstasy, Liquid X, Scoop

Looks like

GHB is usually sold as a liquid or as a white powder that is usually dissolved in a liquid, such as water, juice or alcohol. GHB dissolved in liquid has been packaged in small vials or small water bottles. In liquid form, GHB is clear and colorless and slightly salty in taste.



Methods of abuse

GHB and its analogues are abused for their euphoric and calming effects and because some people believe they build muscles and cause weight loss. GHB and its analogues are also misused for their ability to increase libido, suggestibility, passivity, and to cause amnesia (no memory of events while under the influence of the substance)—traits that make users vulnerable to sexual assault and other criminal acts. GHB abuse became popular among teens and young adults at dance clubs and "raves" in the 1990s and gained notoriety as a date rape drug. GHB is taken alone or in combination with other drugs, such as alcohol (primarily), other depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens and marijuana. The average dose ranges from 1 to 5 grams (depending on the purity of the compound, this can be 1-2 teaspoons mixed in a beverage). However, the concentrations of these "home-brews" have varied so much that users are not usually aware of the actual dose they are drinking.

Affect on mind

GHB occurs naturally in the central nervous system in very small amounts. Use of GHB produces Central Nervous System (CNS) depressant effects including euphoria, drowsiness, decreased anxiety, confusion and memory impairment. GHB can also produce visual hallucinations as well as—paradoxically—excited and aggressive behavior. GHB greatly increases the CNS depressant effects of alcohol and other depressants.

Affect on body

GHB takes effect in 15 to 30 minutes, and the effects last 3 to 6 hours. Low doses of GHB produce nausea. At high doses, GHB overdose can result in unconsciousness, seizures, slowed heart rate, greatly slowed breathing, lower body temperature, vomiting, nausea, coma or death. Regular use of GHB can lead to addiction and withdrawal that includes insomnia, anxiety, tremors, increased heart rate and blood pressure and occasional psychotic thoughts. Currently,

there is no antidote available for GHB intoxication. GHB analogues are known to produce side effects such as topical irritation to the skin and eyes, nausea, vomiting, incontinence, loss of consciousness, seizures, liver damage, kidney failure, respiratory depression and even death.

Drugs causing similar effects

GHB analogues are often abused in place of GHB. Both GBL (gamma butyrolactone) and 1,4 BD (butanediol) metabolize to GHB when you take them and produce effects similar to GHB. CNS depressants such as barbiturates and methaqualone also produce effects similar to GHB.

Overdose effects

As noted above, a GHB overdose can kill you.

Legal status in the United States

In 2000, illicitly manufactured GHB and its salts, isomers, and salts of isomers were made Schedule I controlled substances, because they have a high potential for abuse and no currently acceptable medical use in the United States. The GHB-containing prescription pharmaceutical product Xyrem® is a Schedule III controlled substance whose distribution is limited to a central pharmacy. Xyrem® is an oral solution used as a treatment to reduce the incidence of cataplexy (sudden loss of muscle power).

Common places of origin

GHB is produced illegally in both domestic and foreign clandestine laboratories. The major source of GHB on the street is through clandestine synthesis by local operators. At bars or "rave" parties, GHB is typically sold in liquid form by the capful or "swig" for \$5 to \$25 per cap. Xyrem® has the potential for diversion and abuse like any other pharmaceutical containing a controlled substance. GHB has been encountered in nearly every region of the country. The GHB analogues GBL and BD are available legally as industrial solvents used to produce polyurethane, pesticides, elastic fibers, pharmaceuticals, coatings on metal or plastic, and other products. These analogs also are sold illicitly as supplements for bodybuilding, fat loss, reversal of baldness, improved eyesight, and to combat aging, depression, drug addiction, and insomnia. GBL and BD are sold as "fish tank cleaner," "ink stain remover," "ink cartridge cleaner" and "nail enamel remover" for approximately \$100 per bottle—much more expensive than comparable products. Law enforcement's efforts to identify the abuse of GHB analogs are hampered by the fact that routine toxicological screens do not detect the presence of these analogues.

