Date-Rape Drugs

What are date-rape drugs? So called “date rape drugs” are dangerous chemicals that come as liquids, pills, or powder and are illegally administered to an unsuspecting person in order to take sexual advantage by impairing the victim’s ability to resist sexual contact. Sexual contact under such circumstances is non-consensual, is a form of sexual assault, and is a crime.

What are the effects of these drugs? They impair a victim’s ability to protect themselves by causing sedation, dizziness, incoordination, muscle weakness, emotional detachment, blackouts, and memory loss. They can also cause nausea, hallucinations, seizures, coma, respiratory failure and even death. “Club drugs” which are sometimes shared at parties, concerts, etc. can have similar effects and can also be provided to facilitate sexual assault.

How can I tell if my drink has been drugged? Because they often have no color, odor or taste, these drugs can be added to beverages without the victim’s knowledge. Drug detection strips or cups claiming to be able to indicate if a drink has been drugged haven’t been tested or regulated by the Food & Drug Administration & can’t be relied on. There’s no way to reliably detect all potential date rape drugs with such simplistic methods.

How can I protect myself and others?
- Never leave a drink unattended, be it water, juice, soda, coffee, tea, or an alcoholic beverage.
- Limit alcohol consumption. It’s the most common substance associated with acquaintance/date rape. It can impair judgment and the ability to protect yourself from potential rape or drugging circumstances.
- Drink only from a previously unopened container that you’ve opened yourself or have directly observed being opened.
- Don’t accept open container drinks from anyone you don’t know well enough to trust unconditionally.
- Never accept street drugs from anyone. They can contain any number of dangerous ingredients.
- Have a buddy system. Arrange beforehand to watch out for each other. Arrive to an event as a group, leave as a group, and see each other safely home. Speak-up if something makes you uncomfortable or if you’re worried about your safety or someone else’s safety.
- If you feel you’ve been a victim of drugging, seek medical attention and notify authorities.

What if there’s a sexual assault? Go to a safe place. Call 911 or go to a hospital emergency room or similar medical facility. To preserve evidence, avoid bathing, showering or changing clothes until you get a medical exam. Try not to urinate until the urine can be collected in a medical or legal setting for drug testing.

Get emotional support & other assistance. Contact on-campus resources, including SSU Police: 664-4444; Counseling & Psychological Services: 664-2153; Student Health Center: 664-2921; &/or the SSU Title IX Coordinator: 664-4470. Go to http://www.sonoma.edu/shc/resources/sexual-assault.html for more resources. For a 24-hour confidential sexual assault hotline near you, call 800-656-HOPE.

What are common date-rape drugs? Alcohol, GHB, ketamine and rohypnol are the most common date-rape drugs, but many other drugs can affect alertness, judgment and behavior in ways that can put a person at risk for unwanted sexual activity and other consequences.

For more information, see:
- National Institute on Drug Abuse http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/club-drugs