



# THE BASICS

## Rohypnol

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### *Do you know?*

- Rohypnol is in a class of depressant drugs called benzodiazepines. Depressants are drugs that slow down your brain functioning.
- Rohypnol also has sedative/hypnotic effects. (Sedatives have a calming effect and hypnotics make you sleepy.)
- Rohypnol is a brand name. The generic name for this drug is flunitrazepam. Street names include roofies, rophies, roche, rope and the forget-me pill.
- Rohypnol is not legally available in Canada.
- This drug is usually sold in tablets and taken by mouth, but it can also be purchased in an injectable solution. Rarely, the tablets are crushed and snorted.
- A dose is from 0.5 mg to 2 mg. Effects begin 15 minutes to half an hour after taking it and last from two to eight hours.
- Rohypnol is sometimes used at night clubs and dance parties (raves).
- Historically, Rohypnol was introduced as a tranquilizer because it can calm without causing sleep. In some parts of the world, it is prescribed as a sleeping pill.
- Rohypnol is 10 times stronger than Valium, a related, legally prescribed depressant.

### *Short-term Effects*

While using a person may experience:

- a relaxed, mellow feeling and less anxiety
- drowsiness and dizziness
- the inability to think clearly
- the inability to make proper judgments about the situation they are in
- greater inhibition (doing things they normally would not do)
- feeling and acting aggressively
- slurred speech
- clumsiness
- lower heart rate, breathing rate and blood pressure
- amnesia (can't remember what happened) and blackouts
- the general appearance of being "drunk"

### *The "Date Rape" Drug*

Rohypnol is known as a "date rape" drug. Because it is tasteless and odorless, it can be dissolved into someone's drink, causing the person to become confused and drowsy. It can also cause the person to forget what happened to them when under the influence of the drug. (This is called "anterograde amnesia.") Sexual assault and rape have been known to happen to people drugged with Rohypnol.

The use of Rohypnol as a date rape drug is decreasing because the manufacturer now adds a blue dye that can be seen if it is dissolved into a drink (unless the drink itself is a blue colour).

## Long-term Effects

After heavy use over a long period of time, a person may experience:

- difficulties with general learning and memory

## Tolerance and Dependence

- Tolerance (a need for more of the drug to get the desired effect) can develop.
- Users can become physically dependent (the body needs the drug) and psychologically dependent (they feel they need the drug) on Rohypnol.

## Withdrawal Symptoms

- Withdrawal symptoms can include headaches, muscle pain, confusion and hallucinations.
- Sometimes convulsions (violent muscle spasms) and seizures can occur.

## Other Risks

- Rohypnol is illegal in Canada, so people caught using it could be charged under the Criminal Code.
- People can put themselves in risky situations when on this drug (driving while impaired, having unprotected sex, taking unsafe actions which could cause injury).

## Mental Health

- Substance use and mental health problems often can occur together.
- Substance use may increase the risk of mental health problems.
- People with mental health problems are at higher risk of developing substance abuse problems.
  - Sometimes they use alcohol and other drugs to give themselves a break from mental health symptoms.
  - For most people, though, alcohol and other substance use only covers up the symptoms and may make them worse.

**REMEMBER:** A person's experience with any drug can vary. Here are a few of the many things that may affect the experience: the amount and strength of the drug taken, the setting, a person's mood and expectations before taking the drug, gender, overall health, past experience with that drug and whether more than one drug is being used at the same time. Using alcohol and other drugs at the same time can be dangerous.

## Sources and For More Information

*A Primer of Drug Action*, Robert Julien, Henry Holt and Company, 2001.

*Brown University Health Education Website:*  
[www.brown.edu/Student\\_Services/Health\\_Services/Health\\_Education/atod/od\\_rohypnol.htm](http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/atod/od_rohypnol.htm)

*Buzzed*, Duke University Medical Centre, 1998.

*Canadian Health Network Website:* [www.canadian-health-network.ca](http://www.canadian-health-network.ca)

*National Institute on Drug Abuse Website:*  
[www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov)

*Rohypnol Information* (brochure), Vancouver Island Health Authority.

*Straight Facts about Drugs and Drug Abuse*, Health Canada, 2000.

*Street Drugs: A Drug Identification Guide*, Publishers Group, LLC, Plymouth, MN, 2005.

**For more information or for help with a drug or alcohol problem:** Contact your local Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) office or visit the website at [www.afm.mb.ca](http://www.afm.mb.ca). AFM offers a broad range of prevention and rehabilitation services, including harm reduction and abstinence-based programs for alcohol, other drugs and gambling.

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