

GHB

Also Known As

Liquid ecstasy, GBL, BDO, GBH, Blue Nitro, Midnight Blue, Renew Trient, Reviarent, Somato Pro, Serenity, Enliven

Description

A colourless, odourless liquid sold in small bottles, also available in powder and capsule forms.

Routes of Use

Ingestion, Oral

History

GHB - or to give it its full name Gammahydroxybutyrate (Hydroxy-n-butyric acid) - is a synthetic drug used as an anaesthetic. It has also been used by body builders because GHB is supposed to promote the kind of sleep that is best for protein (and therefore muscle) build-up. Around 1994 it began to appear on the UK club scene. It is sold as liquid ecstasy, although it is in no way related to ecstasy.

Effects People Seek

The drug is usually sold in small 30ml plastic containers (approx £15) and consumed in capsules. A small capsule can make you feel uninhibited, exhilarated, relaxed and feeling good with the effects lasting as long as day. The drug can take anything from 10 minutes to an hour to take effect, its strength varies wildly. Because of its disabling effects, you are exposed to the threat of sexual assault, so be very, very wary of who you're with. Bigger doses can lead to disorientation, nausea, a numbing of the muscles or muscle spasms and vomiting. Increasingly, there have been reports of the drug being used as a 'date rape' drug (like Rohypnol), with victims being slipped the drug via alcohol, or in coffee, tea or hot chocolate (it is almost tasteless). A Home Office report in June 2000 questioned 123 victims of such drug assisted assaults, and found that 70% of the rapists were known to the victim and 12% were given the drug in their home, 10% on a university campus. One in five victims could not remember the assault while around 70% felt physically unable to resist.

Dependence & Tolerance

The health risks are unknown at present, although there have been reports of people suffering convulsions and collapsing. There have been several reports of some users being hospitalised with stomach and breathing problems, although there is almost always other drugs involved. The drug, which is derived from an American anaesthetic, lowers blood pressure and in some cases people find breathing difficult. Overdosing can lead to a loss of consciousness and coma. It is not recommended that asthmatics or those with any form of respiratory or low blood pressure disorders take this drug.

The Law

In July 2003 GHB became controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, after the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) recognised that it was being widely misused and has harmful effects. GHB is a class C drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act. The maximum penalty for possession is 2 years in prison. The maximum penalty for possession with intent to supply is 5 years in prison.