

Prevention Pathways

Online Courses

FACT SHEET

Alcohol, Drugs, and Sexual Assault

Alcohol and Sexual Assault

Sexual assault and **rape** are sexual acts that are performed against a victim's will. The assault may involve physical force or the threat of physical force, use of guns or other weapons, or pressure. Sexual assault also includes forced touching of the genitals, anus, groin, or breast against a person's will. Rape is forced penetration of the genitals, anus, or oral penetration.

Contrary to popular belief, rapists usually are not strangers to their victims. Friends, acquaintances, or relatives commit nearly half of all rapes and sexual assaults.¹ In 95 percent of incidents reported on college campuses, the victim knows the person committing the injury.²

Those who think sexual assault isn't a problem in the United States don't know the facts. Every minute, a woman over the age of 18 is raped in the U.S. That amounts to 683,000 rapes per year. And this number represents only the rapes that are reported. More than 80 percent of rape victims do not report the rape to the police.³

Drinking has become a popular social activity—even among those who are underage. Alcohol use does not automatically lead to assault. However, alcohol use is the largest risk factor for sexual assault. Women who go to bars or nightclubs alone—especially if they are drinking—increase their risk of assault.⁴

A person's judgment and motor skills decrease when alcohol is consumed. Research has found that when a woman drinks while on a date, she has a greater chance of being sexually assaulted by her date.⁵ On school campuses (especially colleges), the larger the quantities of alcohol consumed, the greater the risk is for sexual assault among women on the campus.

Binge drinking has become a problem at many high school and college parties. It is defined, for men, as drinking five or more drinks in a row, and for women, as drinking four or more drinks in a row. Students who binge drink are 21 times more likely than non-binge drinkers to have unplanned sex and unprotected sex.⁶

Drugs Linked to Date Rape

Other drugs, besides alcohol, have been linked to increased incidences of rape and date rape. Abused mainly by high school and college-age youth, these drugs include:

- **Rohypnol:** Also known as “roofies,” “rope,” “roach,” and the “Forget-Me Pill.” It is not legal in the United States, but it is sold in 50 other countries, including Mexico and Columbia.⁷ Rohypnol can be easily added to a woman's drink unknowingly because it is colorless, tasteless, and odorless. It causes partial amnesia, so the woman cannot remember anything that occurs for up to 8 hours after consuming the drink. Many men add it to a woman's drink with the intention of sexually assaulting her while she is unconscious.⁸
- **Gamma-Hydroxybutyrate (GHB):** Street names include “Liquid Ecstasy,” “Soap,” “Easy Lay,” and “Georgia Home Boy.” Like Rohypnol, GHB makes a victim feel and act drunk and very relaxed. Before 1992, GHB was often sold in health food stores. It became illegal in 2000.⁹ Like Rohypnol, a victim will not taste or see GHB in her drink, nor will she remember any events once she awakens.¹⁰
- **Ketamine:** A tranquilizer in liquid or powder form used on animals and humans. Street names include “Special K,” “Vitamin K,” and “Cat Valium.” The liquid form can be added to drinks, tobacco, or marijuana. The powder form can also be added to drinks, as well as snorted or smoked.¹¹ Ketamine causes hallucinations,

similar to LSD. At high doses, it can cause delirium, loss of memory, and depression.¹²

Myth vs. Reality

There are many myths about sexual assault. People see or hear things on television, in movies, or from family members, and they believe that what they've heard is true. These "myths" blame the victim and downplay the seriousness of assault. Destroying these myths is the first step toward stopping abuse:

Myth: *She got drunk. She deserved it.*

Fact: A woman who gets drunk around strangers or friends may show poor judgment, but it does not give a man the right to rape her.

Myth: *Rape is about sex.*

Fact: Rape is a crime based on the need to control, shame, and harm. Rapists use sexual violence as a weapon.

Myth: *Rapists are lonely, sexually unfulfilled men.*

Fact: More than 60 percent of adult rapists are married, and most have normal sex lives with their

partners. Seventy-five percent of convicted rapists are white males, and most are under the age of 40. One-third of sex offenders are arrested for sexual assault before the age of 24.¹³

Myth: *She had sex with him before, so it cannot be rape.*

Fact: If a woman does not want to have sex with a man—even if she has in the past—and he forces her to, that is rape.

Myth: *If a woman drinks, she is more willing to have sex.*

Fact: A woman who drinks does not automatically want to have sex. Women drink for many reasons: for the taste, or to relax. Men who believe that alcohol makes a woman more willing to have sex also think a woman who drinks *wants* to have sex even if she doesn't.¹⁴

For more information, go to www.samhsa.gov/preventionpathways and click on "courses" to find Module 6 of the online course, "It Won't Happen to Me: *Substance Abuse and Violence Against Women*."

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