

GHB

Patient Education Module

What is GHB?

GHB (gamma hydroxybutyrate) is a depressant drug that slows down the messages travelling between the brain and body. GBL (gamma butyrolactone) and 1,4-BD (1,4-butanediol) are chemicals that are closely related to GHB. Once GBL or 1,4-BD enter the body, they convert to GHB almost immediately. GHB usually comes as a colorless, odorless, bitter or salty liquid, which is usually sold in small bottles or vials. It can also come as a bright blue liquid known as 'blue nitro', and less commonly as a crystal powder. Other names: G, fantasy, grievous bodily harm (GBH), liquid ecstasy, liquid E, liquid X, Georgia Home Boy, soap, scoop, cherry meth, and blue nitro.

How is it used?

GHB is usually swallowed, but sometimes it's injected or inserted anally.

Effects of GHB

There is no safe level of drug use. Use of any drug always carries some risk. GHB affects everyone differently, based on: the amount taken; the strength of the drug (varies from batch to batch); a person's size, weight and health; whether the person is used to taking it; and whether other drugs are taken around the same time. The following effects may begin within 15 to 20 minutes of taking GHB and may last for around 3 to 4 hours:

Feelings of euphoria	Lowered inhibitions
Memory lapses	Tremors
Diarrhea	Increased sex drive
Urinary incontinence	Drowsiness
Nausea	Clumsiness
Dizziness or headache	Lowered temperature, heart rate

GHB Overdose

The chemical composition of GHB is highly variable. It's very easy to take too much GHB: the difference between the amount needed to get high and the amount that causes an overdose can be hard to judge. Symptoms of a GHB overdose include:

Irregular or shallow breathing	Memory loss
Vomiting	Unconsciousness that can last for 3 to 4 hours
Seizures	Hallucinations
Sweating	Blackouts
Death	Confusion, irritation and agitation

Using GHB with other drugs

GHB + alcohol or benzodiazepines = chance of overdose is greatly increased.

GHB + amphetamines or ecstasy = enormous strain on the body and risk of seizures.

Long-term effects

Little is known about the long-term effects of GHB use. However, it is known that regular use can lead to tolerance and dependence, which means larger amounts of GHB are needed to get the same effect. Which also increases the likelihood of overdose.

Withdrawal

Giving up GHB after using it for a long time is challenging because the body has to get used to functioning without it. Advice on doing so should be sought from a health professional. Withdrawal symptoms usually start about 12 hours after the last dose and can continue for about 15 days. These symptoms can include:

Confusion and agitation

Anxiety and panic

Fast heart beat

Hallucinations

Sweating

Restless sleep

Muscle cramps and tremors

Feelings of doom and paranoia

Sudden withdrawal from high doses can result in bowel and bladder incontinence and blackouts.