Rohypnol: The "Date Rape" Drug
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Date rape.

We don't like to talk about it—most of us don't even like to think about it. What could be more chilling than waking up in a strange place and not being able to remember the past several hours? Worse yet, realizing you may have been sexually assaulted during those lost hours, and having no proof other than what your body may be telling you.

Enter Rohypnol...or what is becoming known on the street as the "date rape" drug of choice.

Rohypnol is the brand name for flunitrazepam, a tranquilizer similar to Valium (diazepam), but ten times stronger. It is manufactured legally by Hoffmann-Roche Laboratories in Mexico, and is the most widely prescribed sedative/hypnotic in Europe, used primarily before surgery and in the treatment of insomnia. In the United States, however, Rohypnol is illegal, smuggled across the border to be sold as a "party drug" or "club drug," particularly popular with America's young people. Rohypnol has already reared its head in over 1,000 reported cases of possession covering 13 states, according to the DEA, primarily in the South and West.

On the street, they are called "roofies," "ruffies," "roche," "R-2," "rib," and "rope." The two milligram tablets are white, cross-scored on one side with "ROCHE" and the number "1" or "2" circled on the other. Sold on the street for as little as two to four dollars per tablet, "roofies" are as available and affordable as they are dangerous.

It Can't be Dangerous - It Comes Packaged

A deceiving aspect of Rohypnol is the fact it is distributed in its original "bubble packaging," just like many of the over-the-counter medications. This
adds an aura of safety and legality to the drug which does not exist.

Most often fooled are teenagers. Unfortunately, roofies are quickly gaining the acceptance among America's youth. Rohypnol is being reported as one of the "in" drugs on high school and college campuses, and particularly in college fraternities, where a high incidence of date rape already occurs. A University of Florida drug hotline reports "roofies" are often combined with alcohol, marijuana, or cocaine to produce a rapid and very dramatic high. There have been reports of Rohypnol being added to punch and other drinks at fraternity and "rave" parties in the hopes it will lower the inhibitions of the females at the gathering and facilitate easy sexual conquest.

What Makes Rohypnol Ingestion Frightening?

On many campuses, Rohypnol is referred to as "the forgetting pill." Roofies take effect approximately 15 to 30 minutes after ingestion. Along with producing disinhibition, dizziness, some nausea, decreased blood pressure, confusion, difficulty speaking, and inability to move the arms and legs, roofies can produce eight to 24 hours of total amnesia—the biggest danger.

Prosecuting a sexual assault when the victim has only partial-or nonexistent-memory of the crime, is difficult if not impossible. Roofies are often dropped unknowingly into drinks to incapacitate unsuspecting people, leaving them with no memory of an assault or robbery. Since the drug has no taste or odor, this method of drugging is easily accomplished if the victim is unaware.

Fighting Back Against Rohypnol

The best thing women can do to avoid a "roofie rape," as they are often referred to, is be aware and be cautious. Educate yourself on the circumstances and settings most likely to introduce Rohypnol, and avoid them.

In drinking situations, purchase your own beverage—preferably one in a bottle the bartender opens right in front of you, and keep it in your sight at all times. Avoid drinking from the punch bowl, and don't leave your glass unattended on a table or ledge when going
out for a dance. If you do so accidentally, throw it away and buy a new drink. Remember, roofies dissolve quickly, and have no taste or odor. You won't know someone slipped you a roofie until it's too late.

Also, attend parties with friends you trust, and make a pact to watch out for one another. If you notice your friend's words beginning to slur, or she seems drunker than she should be for the amount of alcohol she has ingested, take her home immediately. If she loses consciousness, seek medical attention.

Avoiding Rohypnol drugging is possible if you remain alert to the dangers, and socialize intelligently. As with any crime, no amount of precaution is a 100 percent guarantee that you won't become a victim, but reducing your odds—especially with Rohypnol—is worth the effort.

Could He Be a Date-Rapist? Recognizing Danger Signals in Men

Unfortunate as the truth may seem, any man can become a date rapist if the situation presents itself, signals are mixed, and seduction turns into pressure. Certain types of men are more likely to be sexually aggressive than others, however, and there are signals, even in young teenage boys.

Watch out for:

* Men who don't listen to you, discount your words, interrupt, or talk over you. This behavior shows a lack of respect.
* Men who drink heavily. "Mean drunks" can often become sexually aggressive.
* Men who are excessively possessive or jealous. Insecure men often have to "prove" their manhood through displays of power and control.
* Men who do not respect your personal space.
* Men who disregard your wishes and do whatever they want. If he does this in small ways during daily life, there's no guarantee such a lack of respect won't carry over into the sexual arena.
* Men who have wrong, old-fashioned, or unrealistic ideas about women. "The man is in charge no matter what," and other such attitudes should be a red flag.
* Men who try to give "guilt trips" or berate you for not wanting sex. Secure, stable men will respect a woman's right to say no.
* Men who express hostile feelings and attitudes toward women, various groups, or people in general. Hostility expressed verbally often transforms into violent acts.

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