

Coping with College Series

Date Rape Drugs

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You are out having fun with your friends when suddenly you start feeling dizzy, nauseous, and disoriented. Your limbs feel heavy and you find it hard to speak. The next thing you experience is waking up in a strange environment, with no memory of the time you lost. Sound scary? This scenario can happen and has happened. These experiences are common in many situations where a substance called "Rohypnol" has been ingested.

Rohypnol is a drug ten times more powerful than Valium. It is a potent and quick sedative that is illegal in the United States. Also known as "roofies" or "roaches," Rohypnol can also cause breathing difficulties, extremely low blood pressure, respiratory depression, coma or even death when combined with alcohol. One of the scariest symptoms of this substance is the partial or complete memory loss that occurs shortly after the drug is taken.

Because of the sedative and memory loss effects of this drug, some people use it to take advantage of others. Since the drug incapacitates the victim and causes memory loss, it makes it easy to sexually assault someone, knowing that she/he will not be able to remember what happened while under the influence of the drug. Often, the drug is slipped into someone's drink. Since the tablet dissolves easily, is colorless and odorless, it cannot be detected in a beverage.

What can you do to protect yourself? When you go out to a bar, party, or other social gathering, do not leave your drink unattended. If you are at a restaurant or bar do not accept any drink from strangers, only accept drinks from the server. At parties, do not accept any open-container drinks from anyone. Be aware of the behavior of your friends, and have them watch out for you. Anyone that seems extremely intoxicated after having only a small amount of alcohol (or no alcohol at all) may have been drugged.

What can you do if you think you have ingested Rohypnol? Call a friend, a family member, or the police, and have them take you to the hospital immediately. Call the Rape Crisis Center (827-4005) for support or information. If you want to press charges, do not clean yourself up or change clothes; the police need to be able to collect evidence. At the hospital, request a urine sample as quickly as possible. The earlier you get this done, the better your chances that the drug can be detected in your system.

If you have been the victim of sexual assault, services of several sorts are available to you at Illinois State. Among those services provided are both individual and group counseling to help you cope and heal provided by staff members of the Student Counseling Services (438-3655).