



Every year in the UK, hundreds of people are thought to be victims of drink spiking, where alcohol or drugs are added to a drink without them knowing. A survey in Cambridge nightclubs found that a third of students had experienced their drinks being spiked.

Drink spiking can be linked to sexual assault and robbery, however, the majority of reported incidents

are not linked to any additional crime. Often it is done as a prank, but drink spiking is illegal, whatever the intent. People who spike drinks can be charged, fined or jailed.

## What is drink spiking?

The public perception is that drink spiking is limited to slipping drugs into an alcoholic drink. However, drink spiking can include:

- putting alcohol into a non-alcoholic drink
- adding extra alcohol to an alcoholic drink
- slipping prescription or illegal drugs (such as tranquillisers, amphetamines or GHB – also called liquid ecstasy) into an alcoholic or non-alcoholic drink.

## How to help prevent drink spiking

- Party with trusted friends. Discuss how you will watch out for each other while at the venue.
- Buy your own drinks. Watch the bartender prepare your drink.
- Avoid drinking too much alcohol, especially in unfamiliar situations - It could increase the likelihood of risk taking and make you less aware of danger.
- Don't accept any drinks from strangers.
- Accompany the person to the bar if you do wish to accept the offer of a drink from a stranger and take the drink from the bartender yourself.
- Be wary if a stranger buys you a drink and it's not the type of drink you requested.
- Don't take your eyes off your drink. If you have to leave the table (to go to the toilet, for example), ask a friend to watch over the drinks.
- Buy drinks that come in bottles with screw-top lids. Carry the bottle in your bag when you go to the toilet or dance.
- Don't consume your drink if you think it may have been spiked. Discuss your concerns with the manager or host.

- Tell the manager or host immediately if you see someone spike a drink or if you suspect that drink spiking may be occurring.
- If you are traveling abroad, be aware of the local area and where you can find help. Drink spiking is a global problem.

## Symptoms of drink spiking

You may not realise your drink has been spiked by smelling it or tasting it. The substances used to spike drinks are often colourless and odourless. The symptoms of drink spiking depend on many factors such as the substance or mix of substances used, the dose, your size and weight, and how much alcohol you have already consumed.

Symptoms could include:

- feeling woozy or drowsy
- feeling drunker than expected
- speech difficulties such as slurring
- loss of inhibitions
- loss of consciousness
- mental confusion or memory loss
- hallucinations or paranoia
- nausea and vomiting
- seizures
- an unusually long hangover or a severe hangover when you had little or no alcohol to drink.

## What to do if a drink is spiked

- If you suspect your drink has been spiked, whatever you do, do not ignore the situation because you feel embarrassed - Tell the manager or host what is happening and if you can, try and keep your drink with you, as it could be used as evidence by the police.
- If a friend is affected by drink spiking,
  - take them to a safe area and stay with them
  - If their condition deteriorates in any way, call an ambulance (e.g. they lose consciousness). Otherwise, take them to the nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department and tell the medical staff that you think their drink was spiked.
  - Arrange for a trusted friend or relative to take them home and stay with them until the drugs have fully left their system.
- Report the incident to the police as soon as possible. They will need to take blood and urine samples. Most drugs leave the body within 72 hours of being taken (GHB leaves the body within 12 hours), so it's important to be tested as soon as possible.
- If drink spiking happens to a date, be aware of their ability to consent to sex - you may become guilty of committing rape if the other person is not in a condition to respond or react.
- If you are abroad, get help from a travel representative, local medical services or ask a bar or hotel manager to call local police.

An interesting article for further reading or discussion:

[telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11317161/Drink-spiking-You-need-to-know-about-Britains-hidden-epidemic.html](http://telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11317161/Drink-spiking-You-need-to-know-about-Britains-hidden-epidemic.html)