

# Facts about GHB & GBL

## G, one4b, liquid ecstasy/liquid E, fantasy, drinks, gina, wazz and mils

GHB (gamma hydroxybutyrate) is a hypnotic sedative drug popular in the club and chemsex scenes. It is known by many people for its use in rape and other sexual assaults. It is usually sold as a liquid, gel or white powder. It has almost no smell and a salty/soapy taste.

GBL (gamma butyrolactone) is very similar to GHB except in dosage: it is faster, stronger and easier to overdose on than GHB. GBL is used in stain rust and superglue remover, as an alloy cleaner and a paint stripper. It turns into GHB in your body. It has a strong chemical smell and taste.

GBL, 14BD or One4b (1, 4, butanediol) and sodium oxybate convert to GHB in the stomach and blood stream and have similar effects to GHB. 14BD comes on slower than GHB but can be much stronger.

The effects can take from about 10-15 minutes to an hour to come on and usually last 1 - 4 hours though can last a lot longer depending on the dose and the individual. A hangover effect is often experienced for up to 72 hours afterwards.

GHB, GBL and 14BD are Class B controlled drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act which means buying, possessing, selling, making, or importing them is against the law.

## Harms associated with GHB/ GBL

If not diluted properly GHB and GBL can burn the mouth and throat when swallowed.

Although some people call it 'liquid E' the effects are more similar to alcohol than ecstasy so affect people's ability to make good decisions. It is unsafe to drive, operate machinery or do anything that requires concentration or motor skills/ coordination.

As with alcohol these substances can cause you to slur your speech, become uncoordinated and forgetful, and make poor decisions. You may find yourself saying and doing things you wouldn't ordinarily say or do. Combining this with an increased sex drive increases the risk of users engaging in unsafe sex which can have unintended consequences like pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

Some users become aggressive, agitated and difficult to deal with. Violence and driving accidents can also harm others.

There is a particularly high chance of accidental overdose with GHB and GBL and the many effects that GHB has on the body can make overdoses difficult to treat. It can cause rapid unconsciousness and life-threatening respiratory depression (low air movement in and out of the lungs). Higher doses can cause the heart rate to slow (bradycardia) and stop working (cardiac arrest). There is a very small difference between an enjoyable dose and a dangerous one even with regular use.

### Signs of overdose include:

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| • extreme nausea, dizziness, confusion and disorientation                     | • vomiting (see below for more info) |
| • agitation   | • stiff muscles                      |
| • fits, convulsions, seizures   | • hallucinations, blurred vision     |
| • hard to wake them (sometimes characterized as a type of coma) for 1-4 hours |                                      |



If they become unconscious or stop breathing call an ambulance!  
GHB overdose is a medical emergency

## Reducing the harms

Of course the safest use is no use. But if you are going to use GHB it helps to have the following information:

- Know the recovery position and how to clear an airway and make sure your friends know it too
- Avoid mixing GHB with alcohol or other drugs especially those which have a sedative effect (e.g. benzos, opiates, or ketamine)
- All forms of GHB are dangerous to use with alcohol but especially One4b as it uses the same enzymes as alcohol to metabolise. This can lead to a build-up of One4b followed by a large conversion to GHB once the alcohol has been processed in the body which significantly increases the risk of overdose
- Always start with a very small amount, measuring doses millilitre by millilitre using a pipette or glass eye dropper
- Accurately measure the amount you are taking. Remember the effects of this drug vary a lot from one person to the next; you may not be able to tolerate what someone else can. Be aware that GHB concentration can vary a lot between batches
- Wait for 2 hours before re-dosing as you may not feel the effects right away. If you plan on re-dosing, the NZ Drug Foundation recommends separating out your doses into small containers and using a phone alarm to schedule when you'll take them
- Use a pipette, syringe or pre-measured vial to measure the dose and then mix it into a soft drink rather than drinking GHB or GBL on its own as this could lead to chemical burns in your mouth and throat
- Avoid GHB if you have heart or breathing problems, epilepsy, sensitivity to other central nervous system depressants or general poor health
- Avoid taking GHB when alone. It is safer to use with friends who know what you're using in case medical attention is urgently required
- Make sure you know what you are using. Use reagent tests or head to a drug checking clinic. It helps to know if you have GHB or GBL as GBL is usually 2 to 3 times stronger. However individual batches of these drugs will also vary so be cautious if acquiring G from new sources
- Avoid accepting GHB or similar drugs from people you don't fully trust due to the possible risk of rape, robbery or being left alone if you're too out of it or unconscious
- Friends should always look out for each other –seek medical assistance immediately if someone is showing signs of overdose. If they lose consciousness and cannot be roused, put them in the recovery position and phone 111. Stay with them until help arrives.

## Tolerance and dependence

People can become physically and psychologically dependent if they use GHB regularly and in high doses. Withdrawal symptoms can start 1–6 hours after the last dose including cravings, sleeplessness, anxiety, low mood, and sweating. Depression, anxiety and insomnia may continue for weeks or longer.

It is dangerous to suddenly stop taking GHB if you have been taking it daily for a period of time. Seek advice from your GP or come to CADS Mon-Fri for advice or an assessment.

## References

- <https://thelevel.org.nz/drug-information/ghbgb/safer-using/>
- <https://www.drugscience.org.uk/drug-information/ghb-gbl>
- <https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/ghb>