

# GHB.

## What is GHB?

GHB (gamma hydroxybutyrate) is a depressant, which means it slows down the messages travelling between the brain and the 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.<sup>1</sup>

GHB usually comes as a colourless, odourless, 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.<sup>2</sup>

### Other names

G, fantasy, grievous bodily harm (GBH), juice, liquid ecstasy, liquid E, liquid X, Georgia Home Boy, soap, scoop, cherry meth, blue nitro, fishies.

### How is it used?

GHB is usually swallowed, but sometimes it’s injected or inserted anally.<sup>3,4</sup>

## Effects of GHB

**There is no safe level of drug use.** Use of any drug always carries some risk. It’s important to be careful when taking any type of drug.

GHB affects everyone differently, based on:

- the amount taken
- the strength of the drug (varies from batch to batch)
- size, weight and health
- whether the person is used to taking it
- 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
- increased sex drive
- lowered inhibitions
- drowsiness
- tremors
- nausea
- diarrhoea<sup>2</sup>

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.

### Overdose

If the dose is too high, you might overdose. If you have any of these symptoms, call an ambulance straight away by dialling triple zero (000). Ambulance officers do not have to involve the police.

- vomiting
- irregular or shallow breathing
- confusion, irritation and agitation
- hallucinations
- blackouts and memory loss
- unconsciousness that can last for 3 to 4 hours
- death<sup>2</sup>

Read more about overdose at:  
<https://adf.org.au/insights/overdose/>

### 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.

### 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.<sup>3</sup>

Using GHB to help with the symptoms of the come down after using stimulants can lead to an addiction to both drugs.

## Withdrawal

Giving up GHB after using it for a long time is challenging because the body has to get used to functioning without it. This is why it's important to speak to a health professional when planning to stop using GHB.

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
- feelings of doom and paranoia
- restless sleep
- muscle cramps and tremors
- sweating
- hallucinations
- fast heartbeat<sup>2</sup>

Sudden withdrawal from high doses can result in bowel and bladder incontinence and blackouts.<sup>5</sup>

Find out more about withdrawal at [adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/supporting-a-loved-one/withdrawal/](http://adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/supporting-a-loved-one/withdrawal/)

## Getting help

If your use of GHB is affecting your health, family, relationships, work, school, financial or other life situations, you can find help and support.

Help and support services directory:

[adf.org.au/help-support/support-services-directory/](http://adf.org.au/help-support/support-services-directory/)

Information about treatment

[adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/supporting-a-loved-one/treatment/](http://adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/supporting-a-loved-one/treatment/)

### GHB statistics

Recent use of GHB by people aged 14 or older is very low. Only .01% of people had used GHB in the last 12 months, and 1.0% of Australians have used GHB over their lifetime.<sup>6</sup>

Young Australians aged 14-29 first try GHB at 20.1 years on average.<sup>6</sup>

### GHB and the law

Federal and state laws provide penalties for possessing, using, making or selling GHB, or driving under the influence.

References

1. DrugWise. (n.d.) GHB/GBL/1,4-BD.
2. Hillebrand, J., Olszewski, D. & Sedefov, R. (2008). GHB and its precursor GBL: An emerging trend case study.
3. What are the effects of mixing alcohol and GHB, (2018), retrieved from <https://www.projectknow.com/research/mixing-alcohol-and-ghb/>
4. Galanter, M. & Kleber, H. (Eds.). (2008). The American Psychiatric Publishing textbook of substance abuse treatment (4th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc.
5. Galloway, G., Frederick, S., Staggers, F., Gonzales, M., Stalcup, S. & Smith, D. (1997). Gamma-hydroxybutyrate: an emerging drug of abuse that causes physical dependence, *Addiction*, 92(1) 89–96. Retrieved from Wiley Online Library.
6. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2016). National Drug Strategy Household Survey detailed report 2016. Canberra: AIHW.

Always call an ambulance on triple zero (000) if an overdose is suspected: tell the paramedic exactly what has been taken. Paramedics are there to help and will not involve the police unless there is a danger to themselves or others.

**Other help, support services and resources**

Links to further help and support • [adf.org.au/help-support/](http://adf.org.au/help-support/)

For information on drink spiking • <https://adf.org.au/insights/drink-spiking/>

● **Further information**

**DrugInfo • 1300 85 85 84**

Free confidential information and advice about alcohol and other drugs (9am - 5pm, Mon-Fri)

**Family Drug Help • 1300 660 068 • [www.familydrughelp.com.au](http://www.familydrughelp.com.au)** (Victorian-based)

Services are available to support those around you who may be affected by your drug use. As well as providing understanding, they can provide information about how best to help during treatment.

**Family Drug Support • 1300 368 186 • [www.fds.org.au](http://www.fds.org.au)** (Australia-wide)



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