

fast facts

rohypnol

■ **Overview:** Mention the drug Rohypnol anywhere in the United States, and a single phrase comes to mind: **date-rape drug**. That association burned itself deeply into our collective psyche after multiple incidents of sexual assault were linked to the drug, a fast-acting sleeping pill that had the distinction of being both potent and undetect-



able when slipped into an unsuspecting woman's drink. And despite changes in the drug's formulation (it now leaves telltale tracers and particles when mixed with liquids), it's likely to remain a "date-rape drug" in the public mind for a long time.

■ **Street Names:** Roofies, rophies, roches.

■ **Appearance:** White tablet, scored on one side, with the manufacturer's name (ROCHE) above the number 1 or 2 (reflecting 1- or 2-mg dosage) imprinted on the back.

■ **Effects:** Like all depressants, Rohypnol reduces anxiety and induces sleep, but with a difference—several, in fact. Subjectively, users are more likely to experience intoxication at low doses, particularly when the drug is used with alcohol. In addition, complete or partial amnesia is a common side effect of Rohypnol.



■ **Risks/side effects:** Besides amnesia, side effects include rapid mood swings and violent outbursts of temper. Overdose is also a potentially life-threatening complication, especially since Rohypnol is so often used with alcohol.

■ **Duration:** Effects begin 20-30 minutes after ingestion and typically continue for 8-12 hours.

■ **Medical Uses:** Although Rohypnol has never been approved for use in the United States, it is used widely throughout the rest of the world as both a tranquilizer and a treatment for insomnia. It is also used as a sedative prior to surgery.



■ **Legal Issues:** Rohypnol was never sold legally in the United States but, prior to 1996, individuals were permitted to bring back a 90-day personal supply of the drug when returning from other countries. This loophole was closed for good by the Drug-Induced Rape Prevention Act, which banned Rohypnol in the United States.

■ **Trends:** Although Rohypnol had been a popular pharmaceutical souvenir for American day-trippers in Mexico (One survey reported that, prior to the ban, 43 percent of all prescriptions declared at the U.S.-Mexico border were for three-month “personal” supplies of the drug), the ban reduced the flood to a trickle. And with new changes in formulation, making it less easily used as a “stealth” drug, Rohypnol’s days as a date-rape drug are numbered. And that suits women’s advocates—and rape-crisis workers—just fine.



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