

# G

## FACT SHEET

### WHAT IS G?

G is a term given to the drugs GHB (gamma hydroxybutyrate) and GBL (gamma butyrolactone). Both are depressant type drugs which can produce a high with small doses and sedation with only slightly higher doses. Users report that G makes them feel euphoric, with a loss of inhibitions, increased confidence and higher libido. Most users report that the experience is very similar to being drunk. The effects will vary from person to person and will depend on how much is consumed.

GBL is converted into GHB in the human body after ingestion. G metabolises to carbon dioxide and water, and it is rapidly eliminated from the body. It is not detectable after 8 hours in the blood and after 12 hours in urine.

G has a similar structure to Gamma Aminobutyric Acid (GABA) and acts on GABA-B receptors in the brain, the same receptors that alcohol acts on. By activating the GABA receptors, G can make a person become more relaxed and less responsive.

GBL is used legitimately as an industrial solvent and paint stripper. GHB/GBL are controlled drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

### STREET NAMES

There are more than 80 known names for G and its analogs. Different names are used depending on specific locations and who is using the drug. Some examples include: GHB; GBL; G; Gina; Geebs; Liquid E; Liquid Ecstasy.

### DIFFERENT FORMS

Sometimes G can be bought as an already mixed solution or in its pure form of GHB/GBL. When consumed pure or almost pure, G can taste very unpleasant and may cause burns. In liquid form, G comes in a variety of different bottles.

There are three main types:

- **GHB:** an odourless, oily liquid with a slightly salty taste, usually sold in small bottles or capsules. It can also come in white powder form, but this is rare. GHB is absorbed rapidly in the body. Its half-life is 20-30 minutes, meaning this is the amount of time it takes for half of the substance to be gone from a person's system. The effects of GHB usually occur 15-20 minutes after ingestion and can last for up to three or four hours, if not longer, depending on the person taking it and the amount used. It is suggested that its peak time is 30-60 minutes after use.
- **GBL:** a liquid with a chemical smell and taste. Some users report that GBL tastes like a solvent, similar to paint stripper or nail polish remover. GBL is a precursor to GHB, which means that it is converted to GHB when ingested. GBL is absorbed faster in the body than GHB and it potentially has a faster onset of action. Some users report that GBL is more potent than GHB.

- **1,4 BD (Butanediol):** a precursor to GHB. It is used less frequently than GBL. 1, 4-BD is used in industrial and domestic products such as nail polish remover, paints and industrial solvents (as is GBL).

## ADMINISTRATION

G is mainly taken orally in liquid form by mixing it with water or soft drinks. G is less often snorted, inhaled and injected. Injecting G is dangerous and not advisable.

## EFFECTS

The effects will vary from person to person and will depend on how much is consumed. A euphoric dose for one person may be a sedative dose for another.

The effects can begin about 20 minutes after consuming and may last up to four hours. A dose of G can make a person feel chilled out, aroused, and/or mildly high. Too much G can leave a person dizzy, confused, drowsy or vomiting. G use can also result in seizures, coma and death.

Some sought after effects:

- Euphoria
- Relaxation & a sense of calm
- Increased sociability
- Greater confidence
- Disinhibition/sexual disinhibition (can make people do things they wouldn't otherwise do)
- Increased sexual arousal/enhancement of sexual arousal
- Enhanced libido
- Sleep aid

Some unwanted effects:

- Loss of body control - effects similar to alcohol which can last for several hours.
- Anxiety
- Confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Aggression
- Paranoia
- Come downs
- Loss of muscle control
- Twitching
- Vomiting
- Audio and visual hallucinations
- Grogginess after use

## WITHDRAWAL

The onset of withdrawal can begin 1-2 hours after the last dose and can progress rapidly. Withdrawal can last up to 12 days.

Mild withdrawal symptoms include: anxiety; tremors; insomnia & vomiting; and high blood pressure.

Moderate withdrawal symptoms include severe anxiety; confusion, delirium; feeling of skin crawling and hallucinations.

Severe withdrawal symptoms include: agitation; paranoia and psychosis; muscle breakdown, seizures and death.

## DEPENDENCE

G is physically addictive and dependence can develop very quickly or from regular use over a period of time. Dependence can mean that people will experience withdrawal symptoms on reduction or cessation of use, which can be severe or life threatening.

In certain situations, people may require inpatient treatment for G dependence. It is not advised that a person suddenly stops taking G themselves or attempts to self-detox. Withdrawal should be a slow, tapered process, with medical supervision of a doctor.

## OVERDOSE (GOING UNDER)

G has a steep dose-response curve, meaning, there is only a small variation in the dose required to produce the 'desired effect' and the dose which could result in an overdose. Therefore, it is very easy to overdose on G.

G has a delayed onset which means it can take longer than expected to kick in. An additional risk is that someone may take a dose, think nothing is happening, and then take another dose. This can lead to accidental overdose.

Common signs of overdose can include: confusion; vomiting; dizziness; seizure; temperature; agitation; hallucination; difficulty breathing and coma.

## DEATHS

A number of deaths have been recorded internationally. Death can result from acute G toxicity or severe withdrawal syndrome.

## G AND OTHER DRUGS (POLY DRUG USE)

GHB has the same/similar effects as benzodiazepines or alcohol, which can result in drowsiness, sedation, respiratory depression and death.

The risk of using GHB/GBL is greatly increased when used in combination with other substances like alcohol, ketamine and prescription tablets.

The use of G with stimulant drugs like cocaine, MDMA, mephedrone and crystal meth (Tina) can also be dangerous. Using G with other stimulants can make a person feel more awake. This can mean that someone can take more G than they normally would; increasing the risk of an unexpected overdose.

## SEXUAL ASSAULT AND CONSENT

The sedative properties of G can leave a person incoherent or comatose, so they are unable to give their sexual consent. Whether a person unknowingly or willingly takes G, they are at risk of sexual assault. This can mean that people who use G in clubs or at sex parties are at risk of assault.

## SAFER SEX ADVICE

Using G can increase a person's sex drive, thereby increasing the risk of having unprotected sex and increasing the risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Be prepared - carry condoms with you at all times - particularly if you know you will be using G.

- Use condoms every time you have sex.
- Only use a condom once. Never reuse it.
- Get tested regularly for HIV and other STIs. Testing is free in public clinics.

## HARM REDUCTION ADVICE

Below is some harm reduction information drug workers can provide to G users.

### Every drop counts

It is very easy to overdose on G as there is not much difference (less than a millilitre) between the dose that gets a person high and one that has them 'going under'. Overdose can happen with little warning.

- Always pre-measure G carefully.
- Avoid swigging from the bottle.
- Prepare your own G – avoid using someone else's G.
- Prepare G before a night out/party and only take a certain amount with you so you are not tempted to use more.
- Use a glass eye dropper, syringe barrel or pipette that is measured in millilitres in order to know how much you are consuming. (Avoid using teaspoons, containers or caps to estimate the quantity).

### Start low and go slow

Always use as low a dose of G as possible and wait until the effects are felt. Wait at least four hours before taking a second dose. Each container of G may vary in concentration and strength. There is no way of knowing how concentrated or pure it is. Starting with a test dose will help calculate further doses.

Because G affects memory, it can be difficult to remember when it was last taken. Preset alarms or write down times in a G diary so there is a reliable record of time.

### Take G orally

Avoid snorting or injecting G. It is extremely dangerous to inject G even when constituted with water or other dilutions.

### Alcohol and G

Avoid mixing G with alcohol. Mix with water, soft drinks or juice. Alcohol mixed with G can increase the risk of overdose (or going under) and can delay the amount of time it takes for G to take effect; this can interfere with safer dosing.

### G and other drugs

Avoid using G with other drugs. This carries a risk of overdose. Mixing two or more substances, especially sedative drugs (ketamine & benzodiazepines) at the same time can increase the risk of going under or death. The use of G with stimulants (crystal meth, coke, snowblow) increases the risk of paranoia, hallucinations and aggression. HIV medications can increase the effects of G. It is advisable to use a lower dose of G if using these type of medications.

## **G and other medical conditions**

Avoid if you have high or low blood pressure, epilepsy, convulsions, heart or breathing problems, depression or panic attacks.

## **Effects vary**

The effects of G vary from person to person. What is a euphoric dose for one person could be a sedative dose for another.

## **Think about tolerance**

Tolerance to G can develop quite quickly meaning more of the drug is needed to get the same effect. Try to keep track of your tolerance, writing down how much you take. If you have not taken G in a while, your tolerance may decrease. A change in tolerance can result in an overdose or death even if you restart at a small dose. Developing a tolerance to G will not protect against overdose. You can still overdose on G if you have developed a tolerance or dependency.

## **Use in trusted company**

If possible, avoid using G alone and always use with people you trust in a safe environment. Ideally, there should be someone present who is not using G, who can monitor your consumption and the after-effects. Additionally, the sedative effects of G can put people in vulnerable situations and at risk of assault in clubs, festivals or private parties.

## **Carry condoms**

G use increases libido and lowers inhibitions. Always carry condoms when using G.

## **Store your G safely**

You can apply food colouring to G to differentiate it from other liquids. Don't leave G in plastic bottles at home, parties or in clubs in-case it is mistakenly consumed.

## **G is addictive**

G is physically addictive and dependence to G can develop quickly. Try to avoid frequent use and don't use for more than two days in a row.

## **Don't suddenly stop**

If you have developed a dependence to G, don't suddenly stop using yourself. If you want to stop your G use, get information on a structured detoxification from your GP or local drug service. Withdrawal should be a slow, tapered process, with medical supervision by a doctor.

## **G withdrawal**

G withdrawal can cause serious physical and mental health problems. Withdrawal symptoms can occur if you are dependent, reduce or miss a dose. Seek medical help from your local hospital if you experience acute withdrawal symptoms and have no G.

## **Seek medical help if needed**

Seek medical help if you or a friend has used too much G. Don't assume that people will 'sleep it off'. A G overdose should be treated seriously. Going under on G can lead to seizures, coma, or death. Do not use other drugs in the hope of reversing the effects of G.

## **G reminder**

Because G leaves the system quickly, it might be undetectable in your system by medics if you go under. Carry a 'G card' so medics know what you have taken. If you don't have a G card, you could write 'G' or 'GHB' on your hand or the inside of your wrist.

If you see someone 'going under' on G

- Place them in the recovery position to prevent them from choking
- Seek medical help by calling an ambulance on 112
- Don't take any more drugs
- If you know what they have taken, be truthful and tell the medics. If available, give the medics the bottle or what is left of the G.
- Stay with the person until assistance arrives.

## SERVICES

For a full list of drug and alcohol services see [drugs.ie/services](http://drugs.ie/services).

### **Drugs.ie**

Online information and support for drug and alcohol use. Includes a national directory of drug and alcohol services.

### **HSE**

Freephone Helpline: 1800 459 459. Drugs, Alcohol, HIV, Hepatitis and Sexual Health Helpline.

### **National Drug Treatment Center (<http://www.dtcb.ie>)**

The HSE National Drug Treatment Centre is an integrated person centered specialist addiction service.

### **Gay Men's Health Service ([www.gmhs.ie](http://www.gmhs.ie))**

Services for men who have sex with men (MSM) include free HIV and STI testing, free counselling, PEP, free condoms.

### **HIV Ireland ([www.hivireland.ie](http://www.hivireland.ie))**

Services include free HIV and STI testing, free condoms, free counselling and community support services for people living with HIV.

### **Ana Liffey Drug Project ([www.aldp.ie](http://www.aldp.ie))**

Services include Open Access Service, Needle and Syringe Outreach Programme, Medical Services and Case Management Service.

### **Belong To Youth Services ([www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org))**

BeLonG To is the national organisation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) young people between the ages of 14-23.

### **Man2Man.ie ([www.man2man.ie](http://www.man2man.ie))**

Sexual health information for men who have sex with men.

### **Gay Switchboard Ireland ([www.gayswitchboard.ie](http://www.gayswitchboard.ie))**

Information and support via phone, email and online chat. Tel:(01) 872 1055 or [ask@gayswitchboard.ie](mailto:ask@gayswitchboard.ie)