

Drug Facts: Rohypnol



What is Rohypnol®?

Rohypnol® is a trade name for flunitrazepam, a central nervous system (CNS) depressant that belongs to a class of drugs known as benzodiazepines. Flunitrazepam is also marketed as generic preparations and other trade name products outside of the United States.

Like other benzodiazepines, Rohypnol® produces sedative-hypnotic, anti-anxiety, and muscle relaxant effects. This drug has never been approved for medical use in the United States by the Food and Drug Administration. Outside the United States, Rohypnol® is commonly prescribed to treat insomnia. Rohypnol® is also referred to as a “date rape” drug.

What is its origin?

Rohypnol® is smuggled into the United States from other countries, such as Mexico.

What are common street names?

Common street names include:

Circles, Forget Pill, Forget-Me-Pill, La Rocha, Lunch, Money Drug, Mexican Valium, Pingus, R2, Reynolds, Roach, Roach 2, Roaches, Roachies, Roopies, Robutal, Rochas Dos, Rohypnol, Roofies, Rophies, Ropies, Roples, Row-Shay, Ruffies, and Wolfies

What does it look like?

Prior to 1997, Rohypnol® was manufactured as a white tablet (0.5-2 milligrams per tablet), and when mixed in drinks, was colorless, tasteless, and odorless. In 1997, the manufacturer responded to concerns about the drug’s role in sexual assaults by reformulating the drug.

How is it abused?

The tablet can be swallowed whole, crushed and snorted, or dissolved in liquid. Adolescents may abuse Rohypnol® to produce a euphoric effect often described as a “high.” While high, they experience reduced inhibitions and impaired judgment. Rohypnol® is also abused in combination with alcohol to produce an exaggerated intoxication.

In addition, abuse of Rohypnol® may be associated with multiple-substance abuse. For example, cocaine addicts may use benzodiazepines such as Rohypnol® to relieve the side effects (e.g., irritability and agitation) associated with cocaine binges.

Rohypnol® is also misused to physically and psychologically incapacitate women targeted for sexual assault. The drug is usually placed in the alcoholic drink of an unsuspecting victim to incapacitate them and prevent resistance to sexual assault. The drug leaves the victim unaware of what has happened to them.



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What is its effect on the mind?

Like other benzodiazepines, Rohypnol[®] slows down the functioning of the CNS producing:

- Drowsiness (sedation), sleep (pharmacological hypnosis), decreased anxiety, and amnesia (no memory of events while under the influence of the substance)

Rohypnol[®] can also cause:

- increased or decreased reaction time, impaired mental functioning and judgment, confusion, aggression, and excitability

What is its effect on the body?

Rohypnol[®] causes muscle relaxation. Adverse physical effects include:

- slurred speech, loss of motor coordination, weakness, headache, and respiratory depression

Rohypnol[®] also can produce physical dependence when taken regularly over a period of time.

What are its overdose effects?

High doses of Rohypnol[®], particularly when combined with CNS depressant drugs such as alcohol and heroin, can cause severe sedation, unconsciousness, slow heart rate, and suppression of respiration that may be sufficient to result in death.

Which drugs cause similar effects?

Drugs that cause similar effects include GHB (gamma hydroxybutyrate) and other benzodiazepines such as alprazolam (e.g., Xanax[®]), clonazepam (e.g., Klonopin[®]), and diazepam (e.g., Valium[®]).

What is its legal status in the United States?

Rohypnol[®] is a Schedule IV substance under the Controlled Substance Act. Rohypnol[®] is not approved for manufacture, sale, use or importation to the United States. It is legally manufactured and marketed in many countries. Penalties for possession, trafficking, and distribution involving one gram or more are the same as those of a Schedule I drug.

Connecticut Resources

Department of Mental Health and
Addiction Services
www.ct.gov/dmhas

24/7 Access Line 1-800-563-4086

National Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental
Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov
1.800.662.HELP (4357)

National Institute on Drug Abuse
www.drugabuse.gov



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