

# Gamma hydroxybutyrate: An ethnographic study of recreational use and abuse.

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## **Abstract**

Gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB) is a psychoactive substance with complex neurophysiological activity and significant potential for abuse, addiction, and dangerous toxicity. In this study, a semistructured interview was administered to 17 subjects to investigate GHB use, including: manner of use; setting; positive and negative consequences; other drug history; and sexual practices. Respondents were overwhelmingly male, but otherwise had a broad demographic background. Settings varied from nightclubs to private use at home. There was significant variability in the drug obtained, which subjects found problematic because of the narrow therapeutic window and ease of accidental overdose. Common positive experiences included increased sexual desire, decreased sexual inhibitions, and decreased anxiety. Common negative consequences included oversedation, loss of consciousness, motor incoordination, and mental confusion. Nine subjects reported that they would use GHB again, some despite severe negative consequences. Although most subjects reported negative experiences, only three felt their use was problematic, and none sought treatment for GHB abuse or addiction. Subjects were highly drug-experienced, most commonly using MDMA, ketamine, cocaine, alcohol, and methamphetamine. Some reported that GHB could cause poor decision making in

sexual situations. This effect has significant ramifications for issues such as date rape and control of sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2009 APA, all rights reserved) (from the journal abstract)

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