



MEDIA RELEASE
24 December 2004

Be sure you know what you're drinking

South West Sydney Area Health Service (SWSAHS) has issued a warning to partygoers over the festive season to be aware of the dangers of drink spiking with sedatives such as GHB.

GHB is an anaesthetic drug with sedative properties and is usually ingested in liquid form. Short-term effects include drowsiness, relaxation, dizziness and decreased inhibitions.

However when taken in high doses the effects can include rapid drowsiness, muscle spasms, movement and speech impairments, disorientation, vomiting, convulsions, respiratory collapse and coma.

GHB has been referred to as the date-rape drug because it can be added to a drink without leaving any visible trace.

SWSAHS warns it is almost impossible to accurately gauge the strength of a dose as more dealers are experimenting with their own backyard recipes.

SWSAHS Drug Health Services clinical director Dr Adam Winstock said drink spiking is a growing problem and men and women of all ages need to understand the potential dangers.

"Drink spiking can put people in dangerous situations, such as having unsafe sex, unwanted pregnancy, violence and criminal activity," Dr Winstock said.

"Twenty-five per cent of males and females reporting sexual assault have stated the incident occurred after a case of drink spiking. This is a 9 per cent increase since 1998," he said.

Dr Winstock warned pill and powder type drugs could be easily slipped into a person's drink within seconds. Some drugs have no taste, odour or visible trace, and drink spiking is not limited to just alcoholic beverages.

“If you feel any strange effects such as dizziness, sleepiness or nausea, particularly after having only a small amount of alcohol, ask someone you know and trust to immediately take you somewhere safe,” he said.

When preparing for a night out, it’s important to remember the following points to protect yourself against such incidents:

- Plan your night out and tell people where you’re going
- Never accept a drink from a stranger or leave drinks unattended, particularly if the bottle has been opened
- Tell bar staff if you see someone spiking drinks.

Dr Winstock says one of the most important things to remember is to keep an eye out for friends.

“Never sip a drink if you feel unsure about it and always remember if you suspect your drink has been spiked, don’t drive. Take a cab, ask a friend for a ride or call an ambulance. It’s always best to go with your instincts,” he said.

Issued by South Western Sydney Area Health Service Public Affairs, contact Maree Spry 9828 6848 for further information.