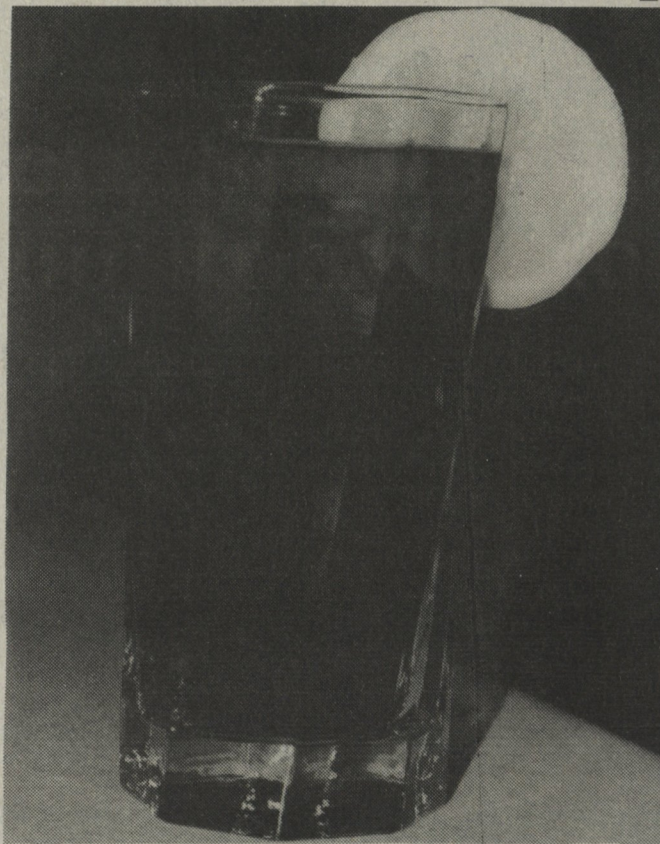


# What you should know about the Date Rape Drug

By EMILIE ADAMS

A woman is sitting with a group of her friends at a local establishment having a drink. They get up to dance and leave their drinks unguarded. They come back to their table a few minutes later and resume drinking. The woman has only had one drink, but after twenty minutes she starts behaving completely drunk. Her speech becomes slurred, her vision blurry and her coordination is way off. She is drowsy and confused, not recognizing her friends or where she is. She blacks out, and when she regains consciousness a day later she has no recollection of what happened to her the night before.

This woman has fallen victim to a new drug being trafficked in North America called Rohypnol, also referred to as the Date Rape Drug, roofies, rape, la roche, rib, R-2, rope and Easy Lay. Rohypnol is manufactured by Roche Pharmaceuticals in Mexico, South America, Europe and Asia. It is banned in Canada and the United States. It is intended for use as a sleeping pill, but now it is being circulated and trafficked for illegal uses only—primarily to drug women, then sexually



*Is your drink safe?*

assault them.

Pills are the original manufactured form of the drug, but it is sold in liquid forms as well. A vial or pill sells for anywhere from \$1 to \$5. Rohypnol is most commonly acquired in Mexico, then smuggled across the border. Although it is a banned substance, there is no law against the possession of the drug.

Rohypnol is ten times stronger than Valium. When

slipped into a drink, it is odourless, colourless and tasteless. It could be put in a glass of water and you would not even know it was there. When the drug begins to kick in, the central nervous system is affected. The symptoms range from drowsiness and confusion, to coma and even death. When mixed with alcohol, the effects are enhanced and small doses can result in a

cheap high. Singer Kurt Cobain fell into a coma a month before his suicide when he combined the drug with champagne.

The effect of Rohypnol can last from 6 up to 35 hours. During the time that the drug is being worked out of the system, the victim suffers from complete memory loss. This makes alleged incidents very difficult to prosecute because the victim has no memory of the attacker and is unable to identify him. Many victims do not even realize that they have been attacked.

Do not think that it won't happen to you. There have been incidents of the date rape drug all over Canada, including PEI. A woman in Summerside was having a coffee with her husband when she began to exhibit some symptoms of the drug. Police believe that someone slipped Rohypnol into her coffee. There was an alleged rape involving the drug at a floor party at St. Mary's University in Halifax. A few months ago, a McGill student was at Gert's, a campus bar, with her boyfriend when she accepted a beer from a stranger. A few

minutes later she was hallucinating and exhibiting very drunk behaviour. It is a very frightening situation for all those involved.

Awareness is the best way to keep yourself from getting into one of these situations.

If you are at a bar, do not leave your drink unattended, even for a moment. People have been known to use hypodermic syringes to squirt the drug into your drink when your back is turned for a few seconds. If you do leave your drink unguarded, get a new drink. There is no way to tell whether or not someone has put something in it. Make sure you have someone you trust with you, because if no one around knows you, they can't tell if you are drugged or drunk.

The most important thing to realize is that Rohypnol does exist in Canada and it is something for everyone, particularly university students, to be concerned about.

If you have been raped, or sexually assaulted and need someone to talk to call:

Crisis Hotline

UPEI Women's Centre

UPEI Sexual Harassment Committee

