
Drink spiking

Summary

- To spike a drink means to put alcohol or drugs into someone's drink without their knowledge or permission.
 - Drink spiking is illegal in all Australian states and territories.
 - Don't accept drinks from strangers and never leave your drink unattended.
 - If you suspect drink spiking or drug-assisted sexual assault, contact the police or a sexual assault service, or go to the emergency department of your nearest hospital.
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To spike a drink means to put alcohol or drugs into someone's drink without their knowledge or permission. Drink spiking can occur wherever drinks are served, such as at nightclubs, parties, pubs, restaurants and private homes. Drink spiking can be linked to crimes such as sexual assault and robbery. In such situations, the offender may spike someone's drink to lower their defences and make it easier to commit a crime against them. Estimates suggest that one third of drink spiking incidents are associated with sexual attack.

Drink spiking is illegal, whatever the intent. This means that slipping alcohol or drugs into a friend's drink as a joke is against the law – this counts even if the drink is not consumed. People who spike drinks can be charged, fined or jailed.

Examples of drink spiking

The public perception is that drink spiking is limited to slipping drugs into an alcoholic drink. However, drink spiking can include:

- putting alcohol into a non-alcoholic drink (such as water, soft drink, non-alcoholic punch or fruit juice)
- adding extra alcohol to an alcoholic drink
- slipping prescription or illegal drugs (such as tranquilisers, amphetamines or GHB – also called liquid ecstasy) into an alcoholic or non-alcoholic drink.

Perceptions of safety and drink spiking

Women are more likely to have their drinks spiked than men, Studies show that most people are not aware of the dangers of drink spiking. For example:

- Many people do not think they are at risk of drink spiking, and do not consider it a common occurrence.
- People may no longer consider an unknown person to be a stranger after talking to them for a while. They are then more likely to accept a drink from them.

Safety suggestions to prevent drink spiking

To protect yourself and your friends against drink spiking, safety suggestions include:

- Do not drink spike, and if you see others doing so, including people you know, call it out.
 - Party with trusted friends. Discuss how you will watch out for each other while at the venue.
 - Buy your own drinks. Watch the bartender prepare your drink.
 - Don't accept any drinks from strangers.
 - Accompany the person to the bar if you do wish to accept the offer of a drink from a stranger. Take the drink from the bartender yourself.
 - Be wary if a stranger buys you a drink and it's not the type of drink you requested.
 - Don't take your eyes off your drink. If you have to leave the table (to go to the toilet, for example), ask a friend to watch over the drinks.
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- Buy drinks that come in bottles with screw-top lids. Carry the bottle in your bag when you go to the toilet or have a dance.
- Don't consume your drink if you think it may have been spiked. Discuss your concerns with the manager or host.
- Tell the manager or host immediately if you see someone spike a drink or if you suspect that drink spiking may be occurring.

Symptoms of drink spiking

You may not realise your drink has been spiked by smelling it or tasting it. The substances used to spike drinks are often colourless and odourless. The symptoms of drink spiking depend on many factors such as the substance or mix of substances used, the dose, your size and weight, and how much alcohol you have already consumed.

Symptoms could include:

- feeling drunk, woozy or drowsy
- feeling drunker than expected
- mental confusion
- hallucinations
- speech difficulties such as slurring
- memory loss
- loss of inhibitions
- nausea and vomiting
- seizures
- loss of consciousness
- an unusually long hangover
- a severe hangover when you had little or no alcohol to drink.

How to help a friend whose drink has been spiked

If your friend is showing any of the above symptoms, suggestions include:

- telling the manager or host what is happening
- taking your friend to a safe area and staying with them
- keeping a close eye on their condition and calling an ambulance if their condition deteriorates in any way, for example, if they lose consciousness
- if you or your friend suspect drink spiking, contacting the police or going to the emergency department of your nearest hospital. Urine or blood tests performed within the first 24 hours are able to detect the presence of most drugs.

Report suspected sexual assault

If you have been sexually assaulted, contact the police or a sexual assault service, or go to the emergency department of your nearest hospital. People who have been sexually assaulted while intoxicated may shy away from contacting police or asking for professional help because they feel guilt or shame, or are afraid they will not be believed.

It is important to remember that drug-assisted sexual assault, like all sexual assault, is a crime. The police and associated professionals are there to believe you and help you. Seek help even if you can't remember exactly what happened. Some drugs used in drink spiking can induce short-term memory loss.

Where to get help

- Police Tel. 000
- Ambulance Tel. 000
- Emergency department of your nearest hospital
- Your **GP (doctor)**

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- **DirectLine** Tel. 1800 888 236 – for 24-hour confidential drug and alcohol telephone counselling, information and referral
- **Sexual Assault Crisis Line** and **Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA)** Tel. **1800 806 292**
- **1800RESPECT National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service** Tel. **1800 737 732** – free telephone counselling hotline (24 hours, 7 days)
- **Victims of Crime** Helpline Tel. **1800 819 817**

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