



Spiking – by drink or by needle – information for YFC members to protect themselves

What is drink spiking?

Drink spiking is when someone adds alcohol or drugs to a person's drink without them knowing.

What is a needle spike?

Needle spiking is being injected by needles/syringes containing drugs, potentially without the target being aware of it happening. This, however, is much less likely than drink spiking.

Every year hundreds of people have their drinks spiked, but many instances go unreported as victims are embarrassed, afraid of speaking out or didn't even realise they were spiked because they don't remember details of the night. Needle spiking is a relatively new phenomenon and is still rare, but gaining in prevalence.

Drinks spiked with alcohol or drugs or needle spiking can make a person seriously vulnerable and can have very dangerous consequences for the health of the person whose drink is spiked or has been injected. Venues should take steps to ensure they are safe places to be, but you still need to protect yourself, particularly if you feel unsafe.

This guide can help you recognise the symptoms of drink or needle spiking and provides advice on what to do if you think you or someone else has been a target of spiking so that you can act quickly to help yourself or another potential victim of this crime.

Spiking someone's drink and needle spiking are serious crimes

Anyone who does either of these could face criminal charges. Spiking a drink – whether with additional alcohol or drugs – or needle spiking are serious crimes that carry a prison sentence of up to 10 years.

A person or their drink can be spiked to make them more vulnerable for a variety of motives, including theft or sexual assault. Spiking a drink or needle spiking with the intention of making someone more vulnerable to assault, rape or robbery is an even more serious offence.

Having sex with someone without their consent is always a crime – no matter what the circumstances are. Having sex with someone who is unable to provide consent through incapacitation (whether or not this was engineered by you) constitutes rape. Assault, rape and robbery all carry additional sentences.

How are drinks spiked?

Drink spiking can happen to any type of drink, whether alcoholic or non-alcoholic. Shots of alcohol can be added to drinks to make them stronger, causing someone to get drunk much quicker than expected. Or, sometimes a drink can be spiked with drugs that are specifically designed to incapacitate someone. These can come in powder, tablet or liquid form, and don't always have a noticeable taste or smell.

Different types of spiking can include the following substances being added to drinks or administered by a needle:

- Alcohol
- Rohypnol
- Gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB)
- Tranquillisers (most often benzodiazepines such as Valium, also known as diazepam)
- Ketamine
- Illegal drugs
- Prescription drugs (e.g. stimulants, tranquilisers, sedatives, opiates)

What are date rape drugs?

Rohypnol (or Roofie) and Gamma Hydroxybutyrate (GHB) are the most commonly known 'date-rape' drugs. Both drugs can be used to commit physical and sexual assaults as they can sedate or incapacitate a victim, making them more vulnerable to attack.

'Date-rape drugs' can be odourless, colourless and tasteless. If your drink has been spiked with a date rape drug it's unlikely that you will see, smell or taste any difference, no matter what type of drink you are having. Some people experience physical spiking by needle without realising it as some needles are very fine and do not cause much pain, plus if you've been drinking, alcohol can dull the senses, reducing sensation.

Most date rape drugs take effect within 15-30 minutes. They also leave the body within a short amount of time making them hard to detect, although symptoms usually last for several hours.

Recreational drugs like Ecstasy, Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD), Ketamine and other 'party-drugs' are sometimes used to spike alcoholic drinks. [Mixing alcohol and stimulants](#) can be very dangerous and can cause serious medical problems, ranging from nausea to coma.

The effects can be unpredictable but are likely to be more serious if the person has also consumed more alcohol, or other drugs (including prescription or over-the-counter drugs). This is because of the combination of effects from the different drugs working at the same time.

It can be a frightening experience so it's important to be able to recognise the signs your drink has been spiked or if you've been injected by needle spiking and how to help someone you suspect has been a victim.

Tagging

It has been reported that on occasion those that spike drinks or needle-spike a person, also tag the person by slipping a tag or fob into their pocket or bag. The fob is linked to an app on the 'spikers' mobile phone. These devices are used to locate a person later when the drugs have taken effect and the person at their most vulnerable.

If it is believed that a person has been spiked (through drink or via needle), check pockets and bags for any unfamiliar tag/fob type devices. Finding such a device could indicate that this person has been spiked. Seek help right away and inform the police - and pass the tag/fob to the police.

Symptoms of drink or needle spiking

The effects of drink or needle spiking vary depending on what you've been spiked with. Your symptoms could include:

- Lowered inhibitions
- Loss of balance
- Feeling sleepy
- Visual problems
- Confusion
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Unconsciousness
- Amnesia
- Finding an unfamiliar tag or fob

The symptoms will depend on lots of factors such as the substance or mix of substances used (including the dose), your size and weight, and how much alcohol you have already consumed.

If you or a friend start to feel strange or more drunk than you should be, then **seek help straight away**.

If you or a friend find an unfamiliar tag or fob in your pocket or bag, **seek help straight away and alert the police (and pass the tag/fob to the police)**.

How to avoid drink spiking

Ensuring all venues are safe from assault and harassment such as drink spiking is a collective responsibility.

All venues that are licensed to sell alcohol have a legal duty for public safety and the prevention of crime and disorder on their premises, and this is monitored by their local authority. These licenses to sell alcohol usually include conditions to ensure venues have appropriate security and staff training in place.

There are also testing kits that can be used to detect certain drugs. But these don't test for all types of drugs, so don't always work, and they can't detect extra alcohol in your drink.

Reporting suspected drink spiking to a venue and the police is one way to ensure enough steps are being taken to keep people safe.

As individuals, there are also things we can do to help avoid being a victim of drink spiking.

Drink spiking can happen in any situation, at home or on a night out. However, there are a few things you can do to [protect yourself](#):

- Always be vigilant and make sure you are watchful of your drink at all times to make it more difficult for someone to spike it.
- Some venues give out drink stoppers or covers for the top of your bottle or glass to prevent someone dropping something in your drink.
- Never leave your drink unattended, whether it's alcoholic or not
- Don't accept a drink from someone you don't know
- Avoid drinking too much by sticking to the [UK low risk drinking guidelines](#)
- Stick together with friends, and look out for each other

What to do if you think your drink has been spiked or you have been needle spiked

- Talk to a friend or someone you trust right away – and either you or a friend /person you trust tell a bar manager, bouncer or member of staff
- Take note of the time you started to feel unwell
- Check your pockets or bag for any unfamiliar tag or fob devices – if found, **seek help straight away and alert the police (and pass the tag/fob to the police).**
- Do not drink more alcohol.
- Don't leave the event alone or with a stranger
- Seek medical attention
- Alert the police that you think you may have been drugged
- Alert the Management at the location where the drugging took place.

How to help a friend who you think has been spiked

If you think a friend has had their drink spiked, and they are showing any of the symptoms described above there are a few things you can do to help:

- Tell a bar manager, bouncer, event organiser or member of staff
- Take note of the time that you noticed you friend may have been spiked
- Check their pockets or bag for any unfamiliar tag or fob devices – if found, **seek help straight away and alert the police (and pass the tag/fob to the police).**
- Stay with them and keep talking to them
- Call an ambulance if their condition deteriorates
- Don't let them go home on their own
- Don't let them leave with someone you don't know or trust
- Don't let them drink more alcohol or take any other substances as this could lead to more serious problems

What to do if you think you've been assaulted

One of the effects of date rape drugs can be amnesia, or loss of memory. That means it's possible that you won't be sure if you've been assaulted. But if you suspect you've been physically or sexually assaulted it's important to tell someone. Try to confide in someone you trust like a friend or family member.

You can go to the police or hospital accident and emergency department. If you don't feel able to do that right away, you can call the Rape Crisis charity helpline for support and advice on 0808 802 9999 (England and Wales 12 noon to 2.30pm and 7pm to 9.30pm every day).

Useful links

For more information google 'Ask For Angela' – most local authorities and police forces have webpages on this campaign and local actions. Here are examples:

<https://www.areyouok.co.uk/im-a-professional/campaign-materials/ask-for-angela/>
<https://www.lancashire.police.uk/help-advice/personal-safety/ask-for-angela/>

For safety advice around spiking, visit

<https://www.talktofrank.com/news/spiking>

Drinks covers [StopTopps drinks cover](#)
[NightCap drinks cover](#)
[Spikey bottle stoppers](#)

(Other devices may be available. NFYFC does not endorse any particular brand and does not guarantee prevention of drinks spiking by the use of any of these devices)



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