

Drink spiking is illegal

Drink spiking is when a person deliberately adds alcohol or another drug to a drink without the knowledge of the person drinking it.

Alcohol is the most commonly used substance in drink spiking. Other drugs that may be used in drink spiking include depressants, such as GHB and Rohypnol[®]. These drugs can change a person's behaviour, causing anything from a loss of inhibition to a loss of consciousness. Drinks are spiked for a number of reasons, such as amusement, or to facilitate sexual assault or theft.

Most drink spiking incidents are considered to be 'prank spiking', with the motivation being fun or amusement. This practice ignores the potentially serious physical and mental health risks related to drink spiking.

Sexual assault is also linked with drink spiking. Estimates suggest that one-third of drink spiking incidents are associated with a sexual attack.

A drink spiking scenario

Tony and Cassie are out on their first date at a new nightclub in the city. Tony is drinking beer and Cassie drinks rum and cola.

Tony is getting the drinks from the bar and, unknown to Cassie, instead of ordering single shots of rum he is ordering double shots. Even though Tony thinks his actions are harmless and a bit of fun, he is in fact committing a crime.

Drink spiking is illegal in all Australian states and territories. Penalties include fines and imprisonment ranging from two to 25 years.

How to know if your drink has been spiked

If your drink has been spiked you may not be able to see, smell or taste it. The drug or extra alcohol may be colourless, odourless and may not affect the taste of your drink.

Warning signs of drink spiking include:

- Feeling dizzy or faint
- Feeling ill or sleepy
- Feeling drunk even if you think you've only had a little alcohol to drink
- Passing out
- Waking up feeling confused, with memory blanks about the night before

What to do if your drink is spiked

- Ask someone you trust to help you get to a safe place.
- If you feel unwell or have been sexually assaulted, go to the nearest hospital.
- Ask your doctor to test for the presence of drugs in your body. Traces of certain drugs can be picked up through urine or blood tests within 24 hours.

How to avoid drink spiking

- When out at a pub, club or party, watch your drinks.
- Avoid sharing drinks.
- Don't accept drinks from people you don't know well or don't trust.
- Buy or pour your own drinks – many people have their drinks spiked by someone they know.
- Keep an eye on your friends and their drinks.

For information about sexual assault, or for counselling or referral, call 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732), Australia's national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service.

Drink spiking is serious. In an emergency, telephone triple zero (000) or the nearest police station.

Adapted from the DrugInfo fact sheet "Drink spiking" (2014, druginfo.adf.org.au/fact-sheets/drink-spiking).

¹ Australian Institute of Criminology. (2004). *National Project on Drink Spiking: Investigating the nature and extent of drink spiking in Australia*, Retrieved from: <http://www.aic.gov.au/documents/7/8/D/%7b78D26268-98C6-4508-8A9A-AA6BD2E34108%7d2004-11-drinkspiking.pdf>