

Drink spiking

Information for patients and public

This leaflet can be made available in other formats including large print, CD and Braille and in languages other than English, upon request.

This leaflet tells you about drink spiking.

What is drink spiking?

Drink spiking is when someone has added something, for example, alcohol or drugs, to your drink, without you knowing. This may affect the way you act or how you behave.

Drink spiking is illegal, even if the person affected is not attacked or assaulted. It can result in a prison sentence of up to 10 years for anyone found guilty of doing this.

Why would someone spike my drink?

There are many reasons; the most common are:

- amusement (for a laugh)
- theft
- rape or sexual assault.

What symptoms will I have if my drink is spiked?

This will depend on:

- the type and amount of drug or alcohol used
- how much alcohol you have had to drink
- if you are taking medication (drugs)
- your body size and age.

Symptoms can develop within 5 - 20 minutes and last for up to 12 hours.

The drugs used often make you feel sleepy, weak and reduce your ability to defend yourself. You may not be aware of what is going on around you or what is happening to you.

Common symptoms include:

- dizziness
- difficulty in walking
- confusion, especially the next day or after waking up
- nausea (feeling sick) or vomiting (being sick)
- hallucinations (seeing things which are not there)

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- tiredness
- visual problems, for example, blurred vision
- paranoia (a feeling of fear or distrust of others)
- amnesia (loss of memory) especially about things that have happened recently.

High doses of some drugs used to spike drinks can cause problems with your muscles, a coma (a very deep unnatural sleep) and death.

Will I be able to tell if my drink is spiked?

It is hard to tell if your drink has been spiked. The drugs are usually tasteless, odourless (no smell) and have no colour so you would not usually know.

What should I do if I think my drink has been spiked?

If you begin to feel drunk after having only a small amount or no alcohol, or you think your drink may have been spiked, you should:

- get help from a friend you trust, a relative or a senior member of staff if you are in a club or pub
- go to a place of safety as soon as possible; but only go home with someone you totally trust. If you are with people you do not know, contact a trusted friend or relative to come and take you home and look after you.

If you start to feel very sleepy, vomit or have hallucinations, you should visit your GP or local Accident and Emergency Department **immediately**.

You should also contact the police as drink spiking is illegal. The police may ask for a sample of your blood or urine to test, to find out if drugs have been used. It is important you are tested as soon as possible if you think your drink was spiked as most drugs leave your body within 12 – 72 hours.

How can I try to prevent my drink from being spiked?

You should:

- not leave your drink unattended and keep an eye on friends' drinks
- drink from a bottle rather than a glass if you can. It is more difficult to spike a drink in a bottle; keep your thumb over the opening.
- keep your drink in your hand at all times
- never accept a drink from someone who you do not know or trust
- not share, swap or drink any left over drinks

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If you go out with someone you do not know; tell a friend or relative where you are going and what time you expect to be back.

Some clubs or pubs can provide devices which can reduce the risk of your drink being spiked. You can also buy special plastic tops to go in bottles from supermarkets. There are also kits available in many pubs and clubs so you can test your drink to see if it has been spiked.

If you think your drink may have been spiked do not drink it.

Further information is available from:

NHS Choices

telephone: 111 (when it is less urgent than 999)

Calls to this number are free from landlines and mobile phones

or via the website at www.nhs.uk

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This leaflet has been produced in partnership with patients and carers. All patient leaflets are regularly reviewed, and any suggestions you have as to how it may be improved are extremely valuable. Please write to the Quality Assurance Team, University Hospital of North Tees or email: patientinformation@nth.nhs.uk

Comments, Concerns, Compliments or Complaints

We are continually trying to improve the services we provide.

We want to know what we're doing well or if there's anything which we can improve, that's why the Patient Experience Team is here to help.

Our Patient Experience Team is here to try to resolve your concerns as quickly as possible. If you would like to contact or request a copy of our PET leaflet, please contact:

telephone: 01642 624719

Monday – Friday, 9.00 am – 4.00 pm

Messages can be left on the answering machine and will be picked up throughout the day.

freephone: 0800 092 0084

Mobile: (can use text): 0779 506 1883

Email: patientexperience@nth.nhs.uk

Out of hours if you wish to speak to a senior member of Trust staff, please contact the hospital switchboard who will bleep the appropriate person.

telephone: 01642 617617

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

The Patient Experience Team is available to discuss your concerns in person Monday – Friday, 1.30 pm – 4.30 pm. The office is based on the ground floor at the University Hospital of North Tees.

Data Protection and use of patient information

The Trust has developed a Data Protection Policy in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. All of our staff respect this policy and confidentiality is adhered to at all times. If you require further information please contact the Information Governance Team.

telephone: 01642 833551 or email: information.governance@nth.nhs.uk

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