

**Patient
Information**

Spiking

Introduction

This leaflet gives you information about spiking, how it can affect you and what you should do if you think you have been spiked.

What is spiking?

Spiking is when someone gives another person a substance without that person's knowledge or consent. These substances can be injected into a person using a syringe, but more commonly are added to a person's drink. Shots of alcohol can be added to drinks to make them stronger, causing someone to get drunk quicker than expected, or sometimes a drink can be contaminated with drugs that are intended to incapacitate someone.

Why would someone spike another person?

There are many reasons why someone should choose to spike someone but the most common are:

- Amusement (for a laugh)
- Robbery/theft
- Assault
- Cause injury
- Sexual assault

Symptoms of spiking

Symptoms of being spiked often mirror those seen when someone has had too much alcohol and vary significantly depending on the type and amount of substance a person is spiked with, but can include:

- Sudden onset of intoxication
- Dizziness
- Tiredness
- Difficulty in walking or difficulty moving

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Emergency

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- Nausea (feeling sick) or vomiting (being sick)
- Hallucinations (seeing things which are not there)
- Visual problems, for example, blurred vision
- Paranoia (a feeling of fear or distrust of others)
- Confusion, especially the next day or after waking up
- Amnesia (loss of memory) especially about things that have happened recently

Will I know if I have been spiked?

It is impossible to tell if your drink has been spiked or not, without some form of testing, as many drugs used are usually tasteless, odourless (no smell), have no colour and leave no visible residue.

If you have been spiked using a needle, there may be unusual bruising or puncture wounds and possibly bleeding, for which you cannot remember any accidents/trauma.

However, even if an individual has the symptoms associated with spiking, it may still be a result of ingesting a combination of alcohol and drugs the person has taken voluntarily (recreational drugs or prescription medications) rather than as a result of a spiking.

What should I do if I think I have been spiked?

Drink spiking:

If you think someone has contaminated your drink, or 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:

- Stop drinking and seek help from a friend you trust, a relative and a senior member of staff (if you are in a club or pub). Some premises may be able to test a drink for the presence of contaminants.
- Go to a place of safety as soon as possible; but only go 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 there is no one available, speak to staff at the pub/club who may be able to summon assistance from the police or other support organisations such as Cheltenham Guardians Safeguarding Team or Street Pastors.

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- If you start to feel very sleepy, or have hallucinations, you should seek medical advice **immediately**.

You (or the staff at the establishment) should also contact the police, as spiking is a criminal offence which should be investigated. The police may ask for a sample of your blood or urine, to secure evidence that drugs have been used. It is important that samples are taken as soon as possible, as many drugs leave your body within 8 to 72 hours.

Needle spiking:

If there is concern about needle spiking - we recommend that you contact Hope House (Sexual Health Services) as soon as possible on 0300 421 6500, Monday to Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm.

Hope House operate a telephone triage system to make sure that people are directed to the right point of care for their needs. You can also visit www.hopehouse.nhs.uk for more details.

If you are feeling unwell and it is out of normal working hours, you can attend the Emergency Department. The Emergency Department **does not** offer routine urine or blood tests after someone has experienced drink or needle spiking to detect the presence of any drugs or other substances.

What do if you been sexually assaulted?

If you have any suspicion or concern that you have been sexually assaulted, we recommend contacting the police and/or Hope House Sexual Assault Referral Centre, (SARC) on 0300 421 8400.

SARC offers a confidential support service for those sexually assaulted. The level of support is based on the individual's needs. This can include emotional, physical and any medical care required. This service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

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Sexual health follow-up

If there is any concern of sexual assault, we recommend a sexual health screen after the incident. Your local Sexual Health Services (Hope House) can offer this service and determine if any treatment or vaccinations are needed. Please contact Hope House on 0300 421 6500.

Reducing your risk of being spiked

It is not easy to avoid someone who is determined to spike a person but there are things which can help reduce the chances of being spiked:

- Do not leave your drink unattended at any point in the night
- Keep a close watch on your friend's drinks
- If possible, drink from a bottle rather than a glass as it is more difficult to spike a bottle, especially if you keep your thumb over the opening
- Do not accept a drink from someone you do not trust
- Try to keep your drink in your hands at all times
- Do not share or swap your drink
- Never drink left over drinks

We recommend only drinking in moderation and to avoid drinking to excess. You should also stay with/or close to your friends on a night out.

Contact information

SARC

Tel: 0300 421 8400

Available 24 hrs, 7 day a week

Hope House

Tel: 0300 421 6500

Monday to Friday, 8:00am to 4:00pm

Website: www.hopehouse.nhs.uk/

Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre Gloucestershire

Tel: 01452 526770 open

Monday 12:00pm to 2:00pm, Tuesday & Wednesday 6:30pm to 8:30pm

Website: www.glosrasac.org

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Police

Contact on 101 for advice.
Telephone 999 in an emergency.

Further information

Mental health support

If you find your mental health and wellbeing has been affected you may wish to contact your GP, SARC or Let's talk for support.

Let's Talk 2gether is an Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service covering **Gloucestershire & Herefordshire**.

Tel: 0800 073 2200 or

Website: www.letstalkglos.nhs.uk

Flare Report

This is an app created for people to anonymously share experiences of places they have felt unsafe. This allows local authorities to understand how and why you feel unsafe and take action if required. The app is quick and free to use, and can connect you to support and advice in Gloucestershire. Flare Report can be downloaded from the App Store and Google Play.

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling. 2011;84: 379-85