

# **GHB - Gamma Hydroxybutyrate**

**Xyrem, BD (Butadeniol), GBL (Gamma butyrolactone),  
GVL (Gamma valerolactone)**

## **What is it?**

GHB has been used in medical investigations, as a nutritional supplement and a street drug. It has been marketed as an over-the-counter sleep or weight-control aid. Bodybuilders claim that it stimulates release of a natural growth hormone and enhances muscle growth. It has been marketed illegally under various names: Gamma Hydroxybutric Acid, Sodium Oxybate, Oxybutyrate, Gamma-Oh, 4-Hydroxybutyrate, Gamma Hydrate, Somsanit, Blue Nitro and Somatomax PM. An investigational form, Xyrem, is prescribed for treatment of sleep disorders.

## **What problems does it cause?**

The use of GHB as a legitimate drug and nutritional supplement was discontinued due to unsafe side effects such as convulsions and heavy sedation. Its sale and use was banned in Florida and California in 1990. The effects of this drug are unpredictable. Within 15 minutes after swallowing GHB, users may experience:

- drowsiness, dizziness, shallow breathing, coma
- amnesia, euphoria, headache
- vomiting, loss of bowel/bladder control
- slow heart rate, low blood pressure

With regular use, people become addicted.

Discontinuing GHB after regular use can result in withdrawal, causing anxiety, shaking, paranoia, hallucinations, fever, fast heart rate and abnormal eye movements for weeks.



## **Why is it so dangerous?**

When alcohol or other depressants are mixed with GHB, extreme sedation and death have occurred. Non-commercial GHB is manufactured on the street and can contain dangerous additives. The toxic dose is very close to the “party” dose, so even amounts as small as 1/4 teaspoon can be dangerous.

## **How is it treated in the hospital?**

Patients exposed to GHB require symptomatic supportive care in a health care facility for monitoring of breathing, lethargy and possible seizures. There is no specific antidote for GHB, but screening for other types of sedatives can be helpful. Call the Florida Poison Information Center at 1-800-222-1222 for treatment details.

**1-800-222-1222**

**Florida Poison Information Center**

**Tampa General Hospital**

