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## 'G' Harm Reduction Resources

by Andy Osborn

Sexual health and addiction services in Ireland have teamed up to produce harm reduction resources aimed to help address increasing use of the drug 'G'.

Those involved in the initiative are: Ana Liffey Drug Project, Drugs.ie, Gay Health Network, Gay Men's Health Service, Gay Switchboard Ireland, HIV Ireland, HSE National Social Inclusion Office, HSE Public Health, and Rialto Community Drug Team.

G, also known as GHB, GBL or Liquid E, is a drug which can give a high, or if too much is consumed, it can cause sedation, loss of consciousness, coma, or even death.

The initiative is in response to a number of people presenting to services for G use, with some turning up in A&E having overdosed on the drug. There have been several presentations of people severely affected or addicted to G products who have required medical detoxification, some requiring inpatient medically supervised detoxifications.

The resources, which are available to download from the drugs.ie website, include a fact sheet, a poster, a webpage, and a wallet sized 'G' card that users can carry on their person. In the event of the person carrying the card being found unconscious, the card will alert services that an overdose is a possibility.

While acknowledging that it is always safest not to take unknown or illicit drugs at all, the campaign recognises that there is a cohort of people using the drug. In response to this, the information on the factsheet and poster focuses on harm-reduction messaging aimed at this group.

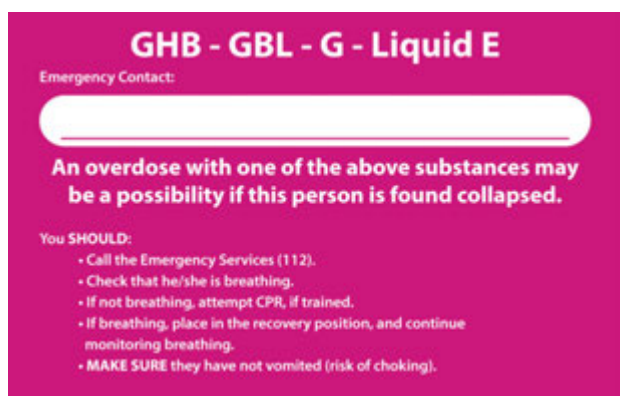
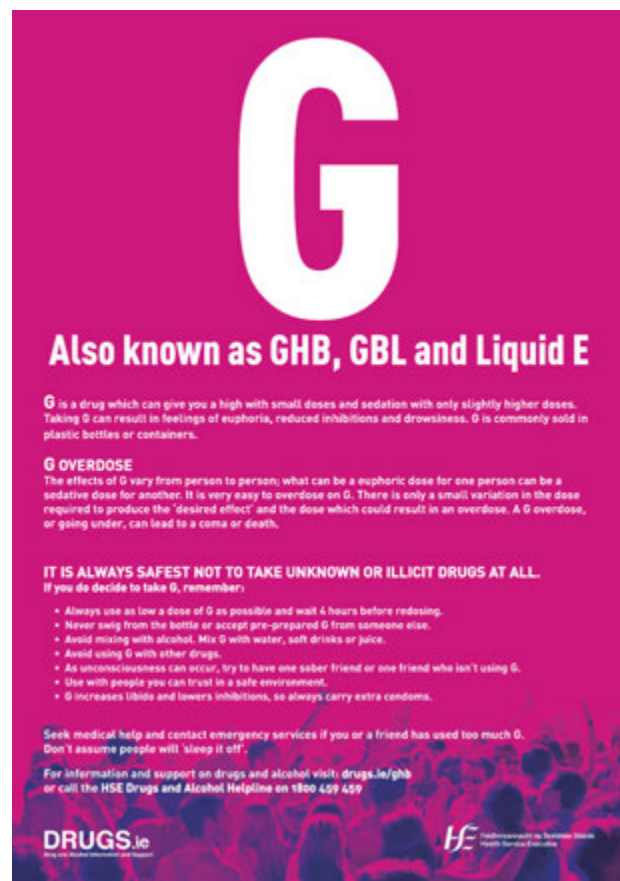
One of the risks associated with G use is its steep dose-response curve, meaning there is only a small variation in the dose required to produce the 'desired effect' and the dose which could result in an overdose. Therefore, it is very easy to overdose on G.

The drug has a delayed onset which means it can take longer than expected to kick in.

An additional risk is that someone may take a dose, think nothing is happening, and then take another dose. This can lead to accidental overdose.

The campaign encourages people to treat a G overdose seriously, to seek medical help and contact emergency services if they or a friend has used too much G, and not to assume people will 'sleep it off'. It is advised to not use other drugs in the hope of reversing the effects of G.

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Speaking about the initiative, Dr Eamon Keenan, National Clinical Lead for HSE Addiction Services, said:

*"The HSE addiction services are pleased to be involved in developing this harm reduction message around the emerging use of 'G' drugs in the target population. Collaboration between services and agencies has highlighted the significant risk posed by these drugs, particularly that of overdose. The fact that there is only a very small difference between a dose used for recreational purposes and a dose that can cause overdose cannot be emphasised strongly enough. Overdose will require medical intervention and emergency services need to be prepared for this, the 'G' card will help in this regard by alerting services to the possibility of 'G' toxicity. Dependence can also develop over a relatively short period of time."*

G use has been associated with the Chemsex scene among the Gay community in Ireland. As a result, outreach workers from the Gay Men's Health Service are distributing the posters in bars, clubs and sex-on-premises venues in Dublin. An original run of the posters and G cards were distributed in December 2016 and January 2017 by the outreach workers in venues including: The George, Pantibar, The Hub (Sweatbox, PrHomo, Mother), Street 66 and The Boilerhouse. With support from the Gay Health Network an additional print run has been completed and the original list of venues targeted by the GMHS outreach workers will be increased.

Siobhan O'Dea, manager of the GMHS, Dublin is keen to highlight the supports which exist, she said: *"the Gay Men's Health Service is a friendly, confidential, non-judgmental service and we are happy for people to come and talk to us or ask for support if they need it. We would also encourage people to have regular STI screening if they are taking part in Chemsex and taking risks as a result."*

In addition to the supports available from the GMHS, individuals with problems associated with G use can present to the National Drug Treatment Centre, Dublin, for an assessment and referral for medical detoxification, if required.



**For more information on G and to download the following:**

- For resources visit [www.drugs.ie/ghb](http://www.drugs.ie/ghb)
- For information on overdosing visit [www.drugs.ie/overdose](http://www.drugs.ie/overdose)
- For a national directory of drug and alcohol treatment services visit [www.drugs.ie/services](http://www.drugs.ie/services)