

GHB is used as a recreational substance. GHB produces euphoria. Small excess dosing can cause profound CNS depression and life-threatening toxicity.

Toxicity / Risk Assessment

GHB and its precursors [gamma-butyrolactone (GBL) or 1,4 butanediol (1,4 BD)] are ingested as liquids.

Onset of effect is rapid. Maximal clinical effects may be delayed when 1,4 BD is co-ingested with ethanol

Toxic effects are potentiated with other CNS depressants

Serious toxicity should be anticipated following any paediatric exposure

Clinical features:

- Brief euphoria, followed by profound reduction in conscious state if excessive amount has been ingested. Duration of CNS depression is typically short-lived (4-6 hours)
- Sudden and rapid recovery is characteristic
- Miosis, bradycardia or hypothermia may be present (but not always)
- Myoclonic movements may mimic seizures
- Death may occur secondary to airway obstruction
- Severe metabolic acidosis may occur in massive overdose

Management

Patients are managed in a resuscitation area. Coma is usually short-lived and can be managed conservatively as long as there is no airway or ventilatory compromise.

Decontamination: Activated charcoal is **not indicated** due to rapid onset of CNS depression.

Supportive Management

- Intubate and ventilate if evidence of airway obstruction or ventilatory failure.
 - Unconscious patients may maintain an adequate airway when nursed in the left lateral position, but still require close monitoring.
 - Bradycardia rarely requires treatment unless hypotension is present.
 - Myoclonic movements do not require specific management.
 - If seizures do occur, benzodiazepines are first line Rx
- *Consider other causes of reduced conscious state or co-ingestion of other CNS depressants in patients with prolonged coma (> 6 hours)

GHB/ GBL/ 1,4 BD withdrawal

- Can be life-threatening (*see separate guideline*)

Disposition

- Patients who remain asymptomatic 2 hours post ingestion can be discharged
- Symptomatic patients: fit for discharge once ambulant with normal observations and conscious state