



# Clinical Practice Guidelines: Toxicology and toxinology/Gamma-hydroxybutyrate

<b>Policy code</b>	CPG_TO_GH_0221
<b>Date</b>	February, 2021
<b>Purpose</b>	To ensure a consistent approach to the management of gamma-hydroxybutyrate poisoning.
<b>Scope</b>	Applies to Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) clinical staff.
<b>Health care setting</b>	Pre-hospital assessment and treatment.
<b>Population</b>	Applies to all ages unless stated otherwise.
<b>Source of funding</b>	Internal – 100%
<b>Author</b>	Clinical Quality & Patient Safety Unit, QAS
<b>Review date</b>	February, 2024
<b>Information security</b>	UNCLASSIFIED – Queensland Government Information Security Classification Framework.
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://ambulance.qld.gov.au/clinical.html">https://ambulance.qld.gov.au/clinical.html</a>

While the QAS has attempted to contact all copyright owners, this has not always been possible. The QAS would welcome notification from any copyright holder who has been omitted or incorrectly acknowledged.

All feedback and suggestions are welcome. Please forward to: [Clinical.Guidelines@ambulance.qld.gov.au](mailto:Clinical.Guidelines@ambulance.qld.gov.au)

## Disclaimer

The Digital Clinical Practice Manual is expressly intended for use by appropriately qualified QAS clinicians when performing duties and delivering ambulance services for, and on behalf of, the QAS.

The QAS disclaims, to the maximum extent permitted by law, all responsibility and all liability (including without limitation, liability in negligence) for all expenses, losses, damages and costs incurred for any reason associated with the use of this manual, including the materials within or referred to throughout this document being in any way inaccurate, out of context, incomplete or unavailable.

© State of Queensland (Queensland Ambulance Service) 2021.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives V4.0 International License

You are free to copy and communicate the work in its current form for non-commercial purposes, as long as you attribute the State of Queensland, Queensland Ambulance Service and comply with the licence terms. If you alter the work, you may not share or distribute the modified work. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.en>

# Gamma-hydroxybutyrate

February, 2021

**Gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB)** and its precursors gamma-butyrolactone (GBL) and 1,4-butanediol are recreational drugs ingested as liquids. Common street names of GHB include Fantasy, Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH) and Liquid E.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Clinical features



The duration of toxic effects is short, with complete recovery expected within 4–8 hours.<sup>[1]</sup>

- Euphoria
- Drowsiness
- Myoclonus
- Agitation/Actue behavioural disturbance
- Coma
- Bradycardia
- Hypothermia
- Respiratory depression

In toxic doses there is typically a rapid onset of coma. The patient is often rousable with stimulus only to return to unconsciousness once undisturbed.

## Risk assessment



- In overdose, GHB can be lethal secondary to respiratory compromise.
- Ingestion of the GHB precursor GBL can cause life-threatening acidosis.<sup>[2]</sup>

## + Additional information

- Myoclonic jerking movements are common and may be confused with seizure.<sup>[3]</sup>
- Coma longer than six hours duration suggests an alternate diagnosis or sedating co-ingestant.<sup>[3]</sup>
- Full recovery is expected when good supportive care is provided.

