



DRINK SPIKING: PREVENTION & RESPONSE

Stay Aware. Stay Safe. Look Out for Each Other.

AWARENESS GUIDE • PREVENTION & RESPONSE STEPS • 2026

WHY THIS MATTERS

Drink spiking is more common than the numbers suggest

71

drink-spiking incidents
reported
in Boston in 2024

The state's own review found the decline in reports likely reflects underreporting, not a falling true rate.



Most incidents go unreported

Many people who are spiked never report it — they're embarrassed, don't remember clearly, or don't know who to tell.



It can happen to anyone, anywhere

Bars, house parties, college events, weddings — awareness and looking out for each other are the best defense we have.

THE BASICS

What counts as drink spiking?

Putting any substance into someone's drink or vape without their knowledge or consent — for any reason.



Extra alcohol

Pouring in more alcohol than someone agreed to or realizes they've had.



Sedatives

Benzodiazepines or similar drugs that cause sudden drowsiness or blackout.



GHB or ketamine

Fast-acting, often colorless and tasteless — can take effect in minutes.



Other substances

Any drug used to impair someone without their knowledge, for any purpose.

KNOW THE SIGNS

Warning signs you may have been spiked

If something feels off — especially feeling far drunker than what you drank — trust that feeling.



Sudden dizziness or confusion

Feeling disoriented or "fuzzy" much faster than expected.



Feeling far drunker than you should

Effects don't match how much you've actually had to drink.



Nausea or vomiting

Coming on suddenly, without the usual warning signs.



Blacking out or losing time

Gaps in memory you can't account for.



Loss of motor control

Trouble standing, walking straight, or speaking clearly.



Blurred vision

Vision changes that come on abruptly and don't pass.

STEP 1: PREPARE

Prevention — before you go out

1 Go with people you trust

A group that looks out for each other is your best protection.

2 Set a check-in plan

Agree on times to check in by text and a plan if someone goes quiet.

3 Share your location

Turn on location sharing with a trusted friend for the night.

4 Plan your ride home

Know how you're getting home before you need to figure it out.

5 Bring drink covers

Stickers or caps for cans and cups deter spiking attempts.

6 Charge your phone

A dead phone means no way to call for help or a ride.

STEP 2: STAY ALERT

Prevention — while you're out

None of this means you did something wrong if you're spiked anyway — it's never the victim's fault.



Watch your drink get made

Order at the bar where you can see it poured and opened.



Never leave it unattended

Take it with you — even to the bathroom — or get a new one.



Be cautious with offered drinks

It's okay to politely decline drinks you didn't see made yourself.



Watch out for your friends too

Keep an eye on each other's drinks, not just your own.



Use test strips or coasters

Many venues and harm reduction orgs provide free spike-testing tools.



Designate a sober friend

Someone clear-headed who can step in if something feels wrong.

STEP 3: RESPOND

If you think you've been spiked

1

Tell someone right away

A friend, bartender, or security — say it plainly: "I think my drink was spiked."

2

Get to a safe space

Move somewhere you can be watched by people you trust.

3

Don't go anywhere alone

Stay with someone — don't leave with anyone you don't know well.

4

Stop drinking alcohol

More alcohol can make unknown substances far more dangerous.

5

Ask staff or security for help

Most venues have protocols and can call for medical help fast.

6

Get medical help if needed

Call 911 for severe symptoms: trouble breathing, unresponsiveness, seizures.

BE A GOOD BYSTANDER

If you suspect a friend has been spiked



Stay with them

Don't leave them alone, even for a few minutes — not even to "sleep it off" by themselves.



Don't let them leave with a stranger

Politely but firmly intervene if someone unfamiliar tries to take them home.



Get them somewhere safe

Move them away from crowds and noise, somewhere you can keep watching them.



Call for help if symptoms worsen

Trouble breathing, unresponsiveness, or seizures mean it's time to call 911.

It's never an overreaction to take a friend's safety seriously — even if it turns out to be nothing.

KNOW YOUR PROTECTIONS

Reporting it won't get you in trouble



Good Samaritan protections apply here too

Massachusetts' Good Samaritan Law protects people who call for help during a drug or alcohol-related emergency from drug possession charges tied to that call.



How to report it

Venue security or staff — most have protocols and can act immediately. **Hospital staff** — can test for substances if you go quickly. **Police (non-emergency line)** — to file a report once you're safe.

GET EQUIPPED

Resources to keep you and your friends safer



Drink Covers

Free, no questions asked

Pick up drink covers at Life Force pop-up sites and partner venues.



Peer Support

Peer support, resources, and education

Find our peer teams at venues and events for support, supplies, and a calm point of contact.



MA Substance Use Helpline

Free • Confidential • 24/7

Call or text "HOPE" to 800-327-5050 for resources, support, and next steps.

Looking out for each other is the single most effective tool we have — keep talking, keep watching out, keep each other home safe.

**Watch your drink.
Watch your friends.
Get home safe.**

A night out should never come with this risk. Until it doesn't, looking out for each other is how we keep each other safe.



Life Force Harm Reduction • *Get Home Safe*

Request free test strips, drink covers, or training: contact us to learn more.