

Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assault (DFSA)

Society of Forensic Toxicologists, Inc. Infographic



Defining Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assault (DFSA)

It is a specific type of drug-facilitated crime (DFC) involving nonconsensual sexual acts in which the victim is incapacitated or unconscious due to ethanol, drugs, or other substances, rendering them unable to resist or provide consent

Key Scenarios in DFSA Cases

Significant intoxication or cognitive impairment may impact an individual's ability to understand and provide consent and may be exploited by a perpetrator.



Surreptitious Administration

A perpetrator places a substance in the victim's food or drink without their knowledge.



Misinformed Ingestion

The victim takes a drug after being lied to about what it is.



Voluntary Ingestion

The victim knowingly consumes alcohol and/or a drug (over-the-counter, prescription, or illicit). Voluntary substance use does not equal consent.

Common Symptoms of Incapacitation



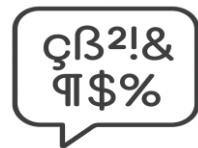
Drowsiness



Dizziness



Loss of Muscle Control



Slurred Speech



Memory Loss



Decreased Inhibitions



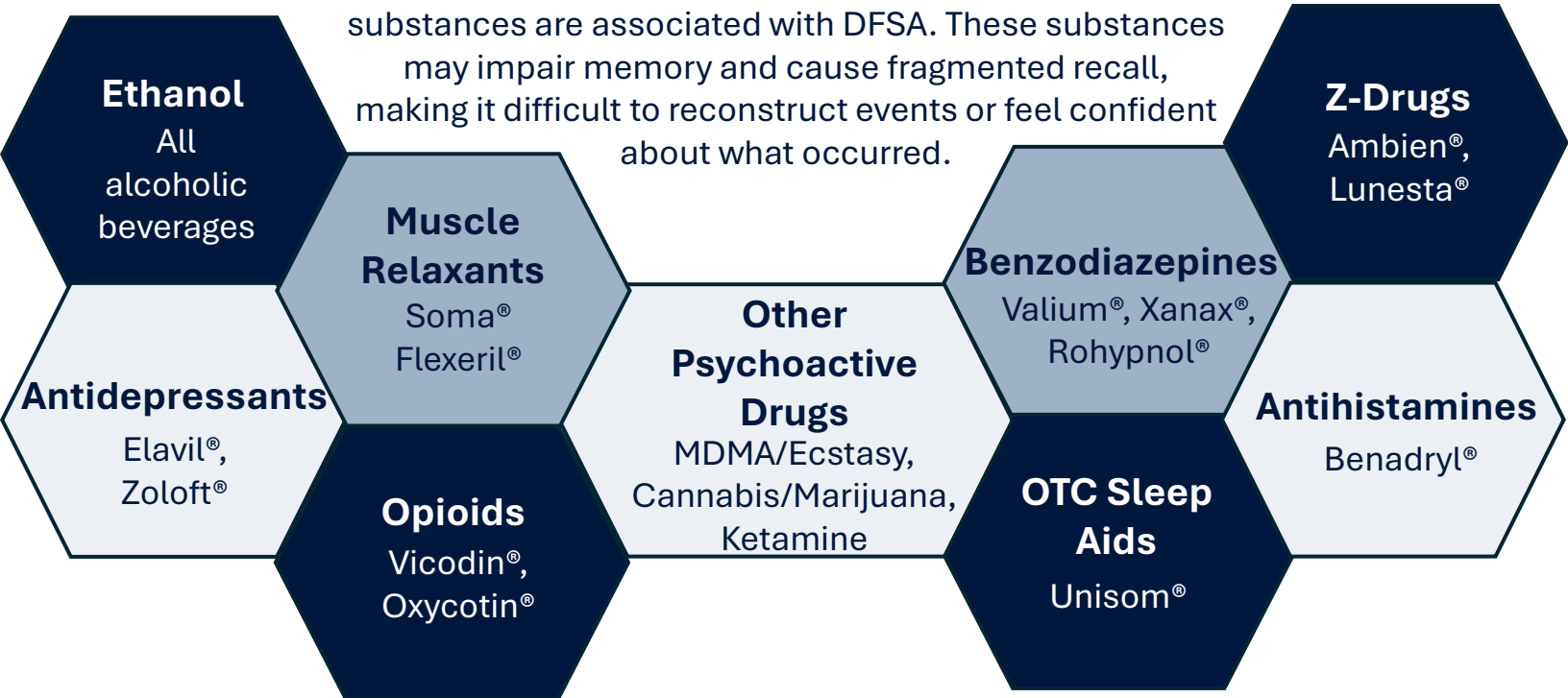
Vomiting



Loss of Consciousness

Substances Used in DFSA

While GHB and Rohypnol are well known; many other substances are associated with DFSA. These substances may impair memory and cause fragmented recall, making it difficult to reconstruct events or feel confident about what occurred.



Protocol for Toxicological Specimen Collection for DFSA

Earlier collection (ideally within 24 hours) increases the likelihood of detecting drugs that are rapidly eliminated from the body.

| Specimen Type | Optimal Collection Window | Minimum Volume | Tube/Container Requirements | Storage |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------|---|---------------|
| Urine | Within 120 hours of the incident | 100 mL | Container with or without sodium fluoride (preservative) | Refrigeration |
| Blood <small>*Used to supplement urine findings</small> | Within 120 hours of the incident | 12 mL | Gray-top tube (sodium fluoride & potassium oxalate) or tube containing EDTA | Refrigeration |

Hair samples may be useful when reporting is delayed or when repeated exposure is suspected.



Ensure Proper Labeling:

All specimens must be labeled with the victim's name, date and time of collection, and the collector's initials.



Maintain Chain of Custody:

Seal all specimens with evidence tape and follow all relevant chain-of-custody protocols without deviation.



Follow Guidelines and Standards:

Laboratories should consult the SOFT website (www.soft-tox.org) to ensure analytical methods meet recommended sensitivity thresholds.

