



UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

SPIKING POLICY

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University of Birmingham Spiking Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University of Birmingham is committed to maintaining a safe and welcoming community for its students, staff, and visitors to its premises.
- 1.2 This Policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant University legislation, such as the Section 8 of the University's Regulations relating to Student Conduct and the Harassment and Bullying Policy. Current versions of these can be found on the University's [legislation webpages](#).
- 1.3 Further advice about spiking, the symptoms, action to take and staying safe is available from the [Guild of Students](#) and in Appendix 1 of this Policy.

2. Definition of Spiking

- 2.1 Spiking is defined as putting drugs and/or alcohol in someone's drink, in another consumable product (e.g. cigarettes), or in someone's body (e.g. by physical injection), without the recipient's knowledge or consent.
- 2.2 Examples of drinks spiking can include:
- putting alcohol into a non-alcoholic drink without the recipient's knowledge or consent;
 - putting more alcohol into an alcoholic drink without the recipient's knowledge or consent;
 - putting prescription or illegal drugs into a drink without the recipient's knowledge or consent;
 - putting prescription or illegal drugs into food or cigarettes without the recipient's knowledge or consent.
- 2.3 Putting alcohol or drugs into someone's drink, food or other product without the recipient's knowledge or consent is still classed as spiking even if the spiked item is not consumed or the person is not harmed. The same is true of needle spiking.
- 2.4 Spiking can happen to anyone; no matter their gender, age or sexual orientation; or whether they are at a pub, club or house party.

3. University Position on Spiking

- 3.1 Spiking is a crime, and the University takes it very seriously. Students who report spiking will be listened to and believed.
- 3.2 Spiking, as a criminal offence, is punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment. If the spiking is followed by an assault, sexual offence, theft or robbery, then the term of imprisonment could be even longer. Students who are convicted of a serious criminal offence may be withdrawn from the University in accordance with the University's Student Conduct Regulations.
- 3.3 Even if a criminal investigation was not taking place for any reason, a report of spiking by a student would still be taken very seriously and investigated as a potential breach of the University's Student Conduct Regulations. Possible sanctions for a proven incident of spiking include withdrawal from the University.

4. Immediate Action to Take

- 4.1 A suspected incident of spiking should be reported to Guild or University venue staff (if the incident occurred at one of these locations) and, if possible, to **Security Services (0121 414 4444)**. The incident should also be reported to **West Midlands Police (999 or 101)** as soon as possible.
- 4.2 If the person who is suspected of being spiked starts to feel very sleepy, sick or have hallucinations, an ambulance should be called, or the student should be assisted to go to the nearest A&E department immediately. They should tell the medical staff that they think they have been spiked. Students can also dial **111** if they need medical help or advice that isn't an emergency.

5. Support for Students

- 5.1 The University is committed to supporting its students. It will give them the support and advice that they need and will help them make an informed decision on what to do next. This includes:
- Disclosure of an incident via the University's online [Report and Support](#) system. The information will go to the University's trained Responders who can listen, support, and talk students through their options.
 - Signposting to Horizon - [Sexual Assault Referral Centre](#) (SARC) or the nearest SARC. Students can call Horizon 24/7 by calling 0800 970 0375. Horizon provides services to anyone who has been subjected to rape or sexual assault, whether they decide to report to the Police or not. The specialist team can offer a forensic medical examination if a recent incident, access to a Crisis Worker, emotional support, crisis counselling, support of an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA), medical care (including sexual health and emergency contraception) practical support and information about making a report to the police as well as anonymous reporting.
 - Formal report to the University: Where the person alleged to have spiked someone is another student of the University or a member of staff, the reporting student may also want to make a [formal complaint](#) to the University.
 - Additionally, the University provides a wide range of [Welfare and Wellbeing support](#).
- 5.2 The Guild of Students can also act as a source of support through both initial triaging via [Guild Advice](#) and in offering practical items to help prevent spiking such as cup and bottle covers.

Appendix 1 – Symptoms of being Spiked

Different people have different experiences of how they feel when they have been spiked. Although not all symptoms may be experienced, some of the short-term impacts that may occur are as follows:

- Feeling drowsy/dizzy
- Nausea and vomiting
- Slowed movements and control of limbs
- Breathing problems
- Disorientation
- Loss of unconsciousness
- Memory loss
- Slurred vision and speech
- Poor coordination
- Vision difficulties
- Lowered inhibitions
- Severe/unusual hangover
- Loss of bladder control
- Changes in heart rate

Long-term impacts reported by victims include:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Social withdrawal
- Problems continuing with education and/or employment
- Difficulties concentrating
- Self-blame
- Flashbacks
- Fear that it will happen again

Depending on the substance used in the spiking, victims may experience longer term physical health impacts.

Precautions and Action to Take

Being spiked is never the victim's fault. The following precautions can help to reduce the risk of spiking occurring:

- Buy your own drinks and watch the bartender prepare your drink
- Use cup and bottle covers where available
- Stay with friends/trusted companions
- Don't accept drinks from someone you don't know or if you're offered a drink by someone you don't know well, go to the bar with them
- Don't leave your drink unattended and keep an eye on your friends' drinks
- Don't drink or taste anyone else's drink
- If you think your drink doesn't taste right, don't drink it. Immediately tell the manager/host.

If a student suspects that they or someone else has been spiked, they are advised to:

- Tell a bar manager, door security staff, or other member of staff
- Stay with them and keep talking to them
- Call an ambulance if their condition deteriorates
- Don't let them go home on their own
- Don't let them leave the venue with someone you don't know or trust
- If possible, try and prevent them drinking more alcohol as this could lead to more serious problems
- Not ask questions that might make the victim feel they are to blame for what has happened to them
- Not suggest that they take a shower or do anything that would interfere with evidence preservation, in case they have been sexually assaulted.

All types of spiking incidents can be recorded using existing crime classifications. Reporting the suspicion of being the victim of a spiking crime should be enough for the police to record the crime. Early reporting will help preserve additional evidence, such as by securing drinks, downloading CCTV, or taking witness details. It is the victim's right to receive a crime number and details of the officer who is investigating the crime.

Testing for Spiking

Although medical help should be the priority, it is the police, not healthcare providers, who usually conduct testing for spiking incidents. Police testing is done by taking a non-invasive urine sample. Some drugs leave the body in a very short time (within 12 hours), so it is important to test as soon as possible. Other drugs remain in the body longer, so testing will still be considered up to five days after the incident (increasing to seven for some drugs).

Full test results usually take around three weeks but can take longer. In some areas, the police may do additional rapid tests. These additional tests can be useful but have limitations due to the limited range of drugs they can detect. A false negative can give victims a false sense of security and deter them from reporting or seeking medical assistance.