

# Drink Spiking – Active Bystander guidance

For Warwick Clubs and Societies.

Prepared by the [Community Values  
Education Programme](#) (CVEP).



Be an Active Bystander

## Why has this guidance been developed?

Students asked for guidance in how they might apply the Active Bystander approach in the context of drink spiking. This information adds to existing information and guidance for the University.

No one is expected to manage dangerous situations or resolve crimes alone. However, increasing our knowledge and awareness of potential strategies and techniques may be helpful in potentially preventing a situation from occurring or providing timely and appropriate support for the victim if a situation has sadly already happened.

Spiking doesn't just happen using drinks

- Food as well as drink can be spiked.
- Spiking may have been pre-arranged (such as baking drugs into food which is then offered by the perpetrator)

Spiking isn't always detectable

- Do not rely on being able to 'detect' spiking by sight or smell, as it can often be undetectable.

Spiking can happen using alcohol too

- Non-consensual addition of alcohol to a person's drink/food is spiking. This includes someone pouring a shot into another person's drink to avoid having to drink it themselves.

It can happen to anyone, by anyone

- It's not just strangers who engage in this behaviour, it can be friends or partners.
- People of all genders can be spiked, though women are most likely to be targets.



## Some of the possible signs of drink spiking:

Stumbling or  
looking woozy or  
drowsy

Looking “out of it”  
or drunker than  
expected

Experiencing  
confusion

Saying they  
feel unwell

Having speech  
difficulties (such as  
slurring)

Acting differently  
or  
without inhibition

Feeling sick  
or vomiting

Experiencing  
breathing  
problems

Having muscle  
spasms or seizures

Passed out

Experiencing an  
unusually long  
hangover


Overly excited or  
euphoric



Many of the signs of drink spiking can be very similar to the signs of ill health, alcohol poisoning or drug overdose.

If someone is unwell, whatever the cause, they may need medical attention and/or other support.

Some potential strategies and ways in which you might be able to help someone in need are discussed next.

 There are five ‘families’ of intervention strategies available to you as an active bystander. If it is safe to do so, you could:

- Take direct action
- Create a distraction
- Get help and involve others
- Document important information
- Support the victim



## Take direct action:

- **Tell venue staff:** Drink-spiking can be a very difficult behaviour to notice, especially in a dark, noisy club environment. However, if you do notice any behaviour which seems out of place, report it to the venue staff (most are trained to help).
- **Raise concerns:** If you suspect that a drink has been spiked but it has not yet been drunk/not fully drunk, you could raise concerns with the person whose drink it is. You don't have to be completely sure, and it might feel embarrassing to act, but it's not 'overreacting' to check other people are safe. You might say something along the lines of "*I'm sorry to interrupt, but I just saw someone touch your glass*" or "*I'm worried someone might have just put something in your drink*". Telling venue staff could also help.
- **Move to a safe spot:** Try and move away from any perpetrators or potential perpetrators.

 Create a distraction/disrupt the sequence of events:

- If it's safe to do so, disrupt the moment and get yourself and the victim to a safe spot and then call for help. Some examples include:
  - *“I think x is not feeling well, I need to get them some fresh air. Can you help get us a taxi”* (draw on trusted friends, venue staff, or the Community Safety team).
  - Act like you know the victim to give you a chance to help them get away from the situation. Some suggested phrases are on the next slide.

If it is not safe to disrupt the moment, alert venue staff or call for help (e.g., Community Safety team or the Police).



**“Hey! I’ve been looking for you. I need some water. Would you come to the bar with me?”**

**“Hey, haven’t seen you in ages, how are things?”**

**“I accidentally spilt a drink on myself. I need help before it ruins my outfit! Will you come and help?”**

**“Do you know when the next bus to campus leaves? I need some help, can you show me”**

**“Hey! Your friends are looking for you. They are over by the bar, let’s go”**

## Delegate and get help in an emergency

- Draw on trusted friends or others in the vicinity to help if you can.
- Alert the venue staff as soon as possible if you are in a bar/club.
- In an emergency call the Community Safety Team (On Campus): 024 7652 2222 or Emergency Services (Off Campus): 999.
- The Community Safety team will ask you:
  - What has happened? *So they know how to respond.*
  - Where are you? *So that they can attend the incident if required.*
  - What is your name and ID number? *To follow up with you if necessary.*
- Alert the Residential Tutor if you find someone in halls who needs help.

**Try and stay with the person until additional help arrives.**

**See Report and Support's [advice page](#) if you or someone you know has had their drink spiked.**

## Document important information to help aid reporting

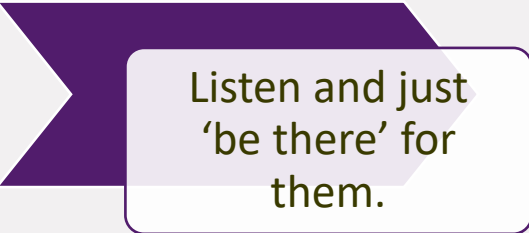
- Keep a record of any information you think will be useful to make a report to Report and Support, the Community Safety team and/or the police.
- Sharing document information on social media has the potential to retraumatise victims, prejudice future court cases, and repeat information that the victim may not want shared.

### **Types of information to document:**

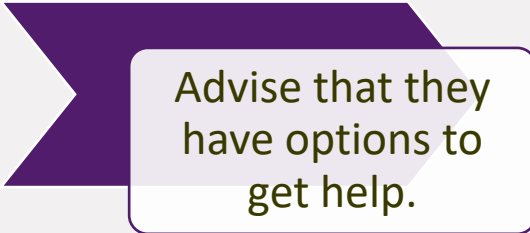
- Time the victim started showing symptoms.
- What the symptoms were
- If you saw any unusual behaviour from others
- Anyone/anything they mentioned interacting with
- When you called for help.



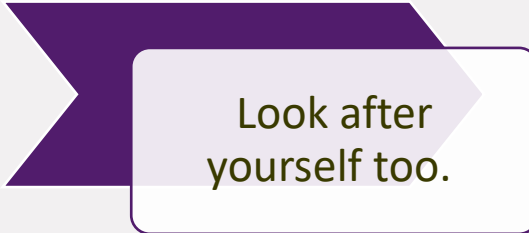
## Supporting the victim



Listen and just  
'be there' for  
them.



Advise that they  
have options to  
get help.



Look after  
yourself too.

Sources of help include personal tutors, Wellbeing Support Services, Sexual and Domestic Violence advisers, Report and Support, Nightline, SU advice centre, and the Chaplaincy.

Thank you to the staff and students who contributed to the development of this resource.



For additional support or if you suspect you have been a victim of drink spiking:

- [Drink Spiking - Report + Support - University of Warwick](#)
- [Drink spiking and date rape drugs | Drinkaware](#)