

Drug Facts: Kratom



dea.gov/kratom

- Kratom affects the body in different ways depending on the dosage level.
- There is a range of mild to severe adverse effects from kratom use.
- Kratom is legal in the United States but has not been approved by the FDA for medical use.

What is Kratom?

Kratom refers to both *Mitragyna speciosa*, a tropical tree native to Southeast Asia, and to the products derived from its leaves that are marketed as herbal supplements. Kratom leaves contain two major psychoactive compounds: mitragynine and 7-hydroxymitragynine. While kratom has a long history of use in Southeast Asia, it has gained increased popularity in the United States in recent years. It is available online and in stores.

Kratom is often used to self-treat conditions such as pain, coughing, diarrhea, anxiety, depression, opioid use disorder, and opioid withdrawal. However, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not approved kratom for any medical use.

What are common street names?

Street names for kratom include Thang, Kakuam, Thom, Ketum and Biak.

How is it used?

Kratom is most commonly used through oral ingestion, typically in the form of tablets, capsules, or extracts. It can also be consumed by mixing the powdered form into food or drinks, or by brewing the leaves as tea.

What Are the Different Effects of Low vs. High Doses of Kratom?

At low doses, kratom produces stimulant effects, with users reporting increased alertness, physical energy, and talkativeness.

At high doses, users may experience sedative effects. Kratom consumption can lead to addiction.

Is Kratom safe?

The United States and some international agencies have expressed concern that kratom products may cause serious harm. The FDA has raised concerns about concentrated kratom compounds like 7-OH, which are unapproved and potentially unsafe. There are no uses for kratom approved by the FDA. There are several safety issues related to kratom, including:

- **Kratom products may contain harmful contaminants.** Kratom products have been found to contain contaminants that produce effects not associated with kratom or kratom compounds alone, including heavy metals and harmful bacteria.



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- **Kratom's adverse effects on the body can range from mild to severe.** These effects include:

- Itching, sweating, constipation, loss of appetite, dizziness, and drowsiness.
- Confusion, tremors, hallucinations, psychosis, and seizures.
- Increased heart rate, high blood pressure, slowed breathing.
- Vomiting and liver damage.
- A small number of deaths have been linked to kratom, usually involving other substances.

- **Effects on pregnancy are not well understood.** Very little research is available on kratom use before, during, and after pregnancy, but the FDA is aware of cases involving neonatal abstinence syndrome, in which newborns experienced withdrawal signs such as jitteriness, irritability, and muscle stiffness following prolonged exposure to kratom prior to birth.

Is Kratom addictive?

Users may experience mild to moderate withdrawal symptoms when they stop regular use of kratom, but more research is needed to understand to what extent people develop substance use disorder symptoms related to kratom use. Withdrawal symptoms can include muscle aches, insomnia, irritability, hostility, aggression, emotional changes, runny nose, and jerky movements.

How is Kratom addiction treated?

There are no specific medical treatments for kratom addiction. Some people seeking treatment have found behavioral therapy to be helpful. Additional research is needed to determine how effective this treatment option is.

An individual with a dependence on kratom should speak with their doctor or other health care professional about behavioral therapy options and other support services (e.g., 12 step groups) that may be helpful.

What is its legal status?

While kratom is legal on the federal level, some states and municipalities have chosen to ban it. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has listed kratom as a "drug of concern."

Does Kratom have value as a medicine?

In recent years, some people have used kratom as an herbal alternative to medical treatment in an attempt to control withdrawal symptoms and cravings caused by addiction to opioids or to other addictive substances such as alcohol. There is no scientific evidence that kratom is effective or safe for this purpose.

Connecticut Resources

CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

www.ct.gov/DMHAS

24/7 Access Line

1.800.563.4086

National Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

www.samhsa.gov

National Institute on Drug Abuse

www.drugabuse.gov

