

FOREIGN SUBSTANCE

Kratom, a drug of abuse that has been popular in Southeast Asia, is relatively new to the United States.

While the FDA does not currently impose any restrictions on its growth, sale, or consumption, kratom is still a potentially dangerous drug that must be treated with care and never abused. Many countries categorize kratom as a controlled substance, placing it roughly at the level of marijuana.

It produces mood-altering symptoms, and is known to be addictive and damaging in heavy doses. But perhaps most importantly, a full scientific investigation of its makeup and effects on the body has not yet been completed. Those who assume that it is safe to enjoy the effects of kratom on a recreational basis choose to expose



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their body and brain to a force that is not yet understood and has the potential to damage them in ways that doctors are not yet aware of.

WHAT IS KRATOM?

The kratom tree is native to Southeast Asia (mainly Thailand and Malaysia). Its active chemicals are concentrated in its large, green leaves, which are picked, dried, and sold. In 1943, the Thai government not only prohibited use of the drug, but also called for the destruction of all existing kratom trees. Because the tree naturally grows in the country, however, it has not been possible to eradicate it. Today, kratom products can be readily found in head shops and online stores.

WHAT IS IT CALLED?

Because kratom is new to the United States, it has not yet acquired any English “street names.” In Southeast Asia, it is referred to as “ithiang,” “biak biak,” “ketum,” and “thom,” among others.

RESOURCES

Go to www.intheknowzone.com for more information on substance abuse. Increase your knowledge using the information, statistics, images, and links. Test your understanding with a quick quiz.

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KRATOM

*imported
addiction*





You never know exactly what it is you're getting, or what toll the drug will take on your body.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF KRATOM?

The effects of kratom are similar to those of opiates, to which the plant is related. In very small doses, it usually improves alertness or adds a temporary boost of energy, while larger doses induce euphoria and tranquilizing effects. While the general effect of taking kratom is a relatively mild alteration of the mental state, the effects vary dramatically and are unpredictable based on dosage. Depending on the size of the dose, effects begin to become apparent after about fifteen minutes and last several hours.

Researchers are still attempting to determine exactly which of the chemicals in kratom are most active. It is certain that, among others, it contains three main alkaloids (mitragynine, mitraphylline, and 7-hydroxymitragynine), one or more of which probably produce its distinctive effects. When the active alkaloid is isolated, scientists will be better prepared to predict its long- and short-term effect on the mind and body.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

There are a number of disturbing known side effects connected with kratom use. Most occur when the drug is taken in heavy or totally excessive doses. The most common short-term side effects are vomiting and nausea, in addition to the obvious temporary impairment of mental and motor functions resulting

mood-altering symptoms

vomiting and nausea

risk of addiction

from tranquilization. Other effects include constipation, darkening of the skin, anorexia and insomnia. Just like other opiates such as heroin and morphine, kratom is addictive. Users can easily become dependent with frequent use.

LACK OF RESEARCH

Because our understanding of kratom's effects is largely based on anecdotal evidence, it may well affect the mind and body in ways that we are not yet aware of. While careful study continues in laboratories and in animal tests, a far more dangerous experiment is also under way in the bodies of those who abuse kratom recreationally. It is highly irresponsible to allow this substance to have free course in the body without knowing fully what long-lasting damage it can cause. The fact that many countries, including Thailand, have made it illegal is a strong indicator that kratom is hazardous.

WHAT YOU GET IS NOT ALWAYS WHAT YOU THINK

Because of its legal status, Kratom is widely available for purchase on the Internet and in disreputable retail stores. Many of these "products" claim to contain kratom extract in varying doses. One such product, "Krypton Kratom," was laced with a powerful opioid

analgesic kicker (O-desmethyltramadol) that resulted in at least 9 overdose deaths in one year alone. Taking recreational drugs, whether legal or not, is dangerous and risky. You never know exactly what it is you're getting, or what toll the drug will take on your body.

A WORD TO THE WISE

No form of drug abuse comes without consequences, and in the case of kratom, there are plenty of reasons to avoid it. The risk of addiction is very real, and the more kratom a person uses, the higher dose he or she needs in order to enjoy the same effects. The fact that the drug is not yet illegal in the U.S. is not an endorsement of its safety, but rather an acknowledgement that there is not enough known about the drug to warrant the government's involvement.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Kratom is most often found in the form of dried leaves. The leaves are chewed, smoked, brewed in tea, or ground and packaged in capsules. Just half of a leaf can produce noticeable effects when ingested. The drug may also be found in a more powerful liquid or cake extract form. Many mood-altering "herbal supplements" also claim to contain kratom.



Taking kratom is just as dangerous as taking a street drug, and those who make the choice to experiment with it play a dangerous game with their health, their future or even their lives.