

Kratom – What is it, how is it used, and what are the effects?

What is it? Kratom is a tropical tree in Southeast Asia. Consumption of its leaves causes stimulant and sedative effects in different doses.

How is it used? It is primarily used by oral ingestion via tablet or capsule. It can also be crushed and smoked, brewed as a tea, or the raw leaves may be chewed.

How does it affect the body? At low doses, kratom produces stimulant effects with users reporting increased alertness, physical energy, and talkativeness. At high doses, users experience sedative effects. Side effects include nausea, itching, sweating, dry mouth, constipation, increased urination, tachycardia, vomiting, drowsiness, and loss of appetite. **Kratom consumption can lead to addiction.**¹



Kratom Use, Misuse, and Overdose Deaths

Estimates from the American Kratom Association suggest 3 to 5 million individuals in the U.S. may be using Kratom.² According to the DEA, several cases of psychosis resulting from use of Kratom use have been reported, where individuals addicted to kratom exhibited psychotic symptoms, including hallucinations, delusion, and confusion.¹

In 2019, a CDC report found that Kratom was detected in 152 overdose deaths between July 2016-December 2017. Kratom was identified as the cause of death in 91 of the 152 Kratom-positive deaths but was the only identified substance in just seven of these cases. Data suggests that Kratom use is associated with a complex population of poly-drug users and especially with opioid use disorder, and that a deeper investigation into the toxicity of Kratom is needed, especially focusing on drug-herb interactions.³

Kratom Use in Idaho



It is currently legal to buy and sell kratom in Idaho. It can be purchased in smoke shops, boutique botanical stores, and online vendors.

Nationwide the number of Kratom exposures reported to Poison Control Centers (PCCs) increased 52-fold between 2011-2017. Data from PCCs found that **Idaho had the highest Kratom exposure rate in the U.S.**⁴

Between January 2017-May 2018 a total of 199 people from 41 states, including 10 individuals from Idaho, were infected with Salmonella linked to Kratom consumption.⁵

Legal Status

What is its legal status? Kratom is not controlled under the Controlled Substances Act in the U.S.; however, there are some state-, city-, and county-specific regulations or prohibitions against the possession and use of Kratom.² The FDA has not approved Kratom for any medical use and it is listed as a Drug and Chemical of Concern by the DEA.¹

Idaho House Bill 567 was introduced during the 2020 Legislative session and proposed to *“Add to existing law to provide for registration and labeling, to provide for prohibited acts, to provide for the prohibition of sale to minors, and to provide for violations and penalties.”* The Bill was referred to Agricultural Affairs Committee. No action was taken.⁶

Where is Kratom Illegal?



Australia, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Myanmar, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Thailand.



Arkansas, Alabama, Indiana, Rhode Island, Wisconsin, Vermont, D.C. Alton, IL; Columbus, MS; Denver, CO; Jerseyville, IL; San Diego, CA; Sarasota, FL. Union County, MS.

¹ Kratom Drug Fact Sheet. (2020). Drug Enforcement Agency. <https://www.dea.gov/factsheets/kratom>

² Veltri, C., & Grundmann, O. (2019). Current perspectives on the impact of Kratom use. Substance abuse and rehabilitation, 10, 23–31. <https://doi.org/10.2147/SAR.S164261>

³ Olsen, E. O., O'Donnell, J., Mattson, C. L., Schier, J. G., & Wilson, N. (2019). Notes from the Field: Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths with Kratom Detected - 27 States, July 2016-December 2017. Morbidity and mortality weekly report. <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6814a2>

⁴ Post, S., Spiller, H., Chounthirath, T., Smith, G. (2019). Kratom exposures reported to U.S. poison control centers: 2011-17, Clinical Toxicology. [10.1080/15563650.2019.1569236](https://doi.org/10.1080/15563650.2019.1569236)

⁵ Multistate Outbreak of Salmonella Infections Linked to Kratom. (2018). CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/kratom-02-18/index.html>

⁶ House Bill 567, 2020 Legislation. Idaho State Legislature. <https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2020/legislation/H0567/>