

# THE FACTS ABOUT KRATOM



Kratom is a plant grown in Southeastern Asia with similar effects to meth and prescription pain relievers or heroin. Kratom users say it helps with many health issues from high blood pressure to addiction, but these benefits have not been proven with research. To date, no one has asked the FDA to develop and research a drug from kratom. Instead, businesses are making billions of dollars selling products labelled as kratom, that might not actually have kratom in them, that have not been tested for harmful toxins. Kratom is addictive and dangerous, even deadly, but it is legal in Idaho. It's also easy to get. One can purchase kratom on the internet, in smoke shops, or specialty stores across the state with no age restrictions. The Office of Drug Policy agrees with the FDA commissioner Scott Gottlieb when he said,



While we remain **open to the potential medicinal uses** of kratom, those uses must be backed by **sound-science** and **weighed appropriately against the potential for abuse**. They must be put through a proper evaluative process that **involves the DEA and the FDA**<sup>7</sup>.



## OVERVIEW

Grown in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines, kratom, *Mitragyna speciosa*, is in the coffee family<sup>10</sup>. Kratom leaves can be chewed or smoked, made into liquids or teas<sup>10</sup>, or mixed with other drugs, like alcohol<sup>4</sup>. Mitragynine is the most common chemical in kratom. Another chemical found in kratom, 7-hydroxymitragynine, has similar effects of an opioid, but is 13 times stronger than morphine<sup>14,22</sup>.



**AN ACTIVE COMPONENT IN KRATOM IS 13X STRONGER THAN MORPHINE**

## EFFECTS

Kratom affects many areas of the brain, including parts that control **pleasure, mood, emotion, digestion, pain, blood flow, and energy**<sup>20,15</sup>. Kratom's supposed benefits are relief from pain, high blood pressure, coughing, and diarrhea. Users also say that kratom improves energy. Most popular in recent reports, though, is kratom's reputation as an alternative to prescription pain relievers or heroin<sup>26,1</sup>.

**NALOXONE, A DRUG THAT HELPS TO PREVENT DEATH IN OPIOID OVERDOSES, DOES NOT HELP PEOPLE OVERDOSING ON KRATOM**<sup>9,11</sup>.

Kratom acts like a stimulant<sup>2,27</sup> in small doses (1-5 g)<sup>17,24</sup>, but an opioid<sup>2,27</sup> in larger doses (5-15 g)<sup>17,24</sup>. Talking about getting high from kratom, one person said,

"I start to feel this intense warmth come over my entire body, it feels like a combination of my first **MDMA** high with a nice **OxyContin** like twist, along with the social aspect of **Cocaine**."<sup>4</sup>



Although taking kratom might reduce anxiety<sup>27</sup> short-term, it also highly affects learning, even after a small dose<sup>27</sup>. Kratom use is linked to losses in learning and memory. Other harmful consequences of kratom use include high blood pressure<sup>4</sup>, kidney<sup>8</sup> and heart problems<sup>13</sup>, addiction<sup>27</sup>, seizures<sup>7</sup>, and liver failure<sup>8,12</sup>. **Kratom is also deadly**. There have been 36 deaths linked to kratom<sup>7</sup>, but there might be more as kratom is not identified in conventional drug tests<sup>5</sup>.

Kratom is addictive<sup>27</sup>. Although limited research is available, withdrawal symptoms can include **anger, nervousness, restlessness, sadness, body aches, jerky movements, weight loss, lowered sex drive, diarrhea, watery eyes, runny nose, hot flashes, fever, problems sleeping, and psychosis**<sup>10,18,21,3</sup>.

THE HARM THAT **KRATOM** CAUSES HAS BEEN COMPARED TO **METH AND MORPHINE**<sup>27</sup>.

## LEGAL STATUS



Kratom is illegal in 16 countries<sup>7</sup> including Myanmar, Bhutan, **Thailand, Malaysia**, Australia, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania<sup>19,25</sup>. **It is legal in the United States and the United Kingdom**<sup>6,10</sup>. Even though it is not illegal, the FDA is working to prevent shipments of kratom entering the United States. To date, the FDA has held hundreds of shipments<sup>7</sup>. Individual states including Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Tennessee, and Wisconsin have banned kratom<sup>7,4</sup>.

There has been growing concern about kratom use. On November 14, 2017, the **FDA wrote a statement on the risks of using kratom**<sup>7</sup>. There are no FDA-approved medical uses for kratom. To date, no marketer has developed a drug that includes kratom<sup>7</sup>. Yet, kratom use will likely increase in the United States in the future<sup>19</sup>.

ACCORDING TO THE FDA, **POISON CONTROL CENTER CALLS ABOUT KRATOM HAVE INCREASED BY 10 TIMES FROM 2010 TO 2015**<sup>7</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

As the FDA commissioner recently said,

"Given all these considerations, we must ask ourselves whether the use of kratom – for recreation, pain or other reasons – could **expand the opioid epidemic**. Alternatively, if proponents are right and kratom can be used to help treat opioid addiction, clients deserve to have **clear, reliable evidence** of these benefits."<sup>7</sup>

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