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."

OVERVIEW

Grown in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines, kratom, *Mitragyna speciosa*, is in the coffee family. Kratom leaves can be chewed or smoked, made into liquids or teas, or mixed with other drugs, like alcohol. 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.

EFFECTS

Kratom affects many areas of the brain, including parts that control pleasure, mood, emotion, digestion, pain, blood flow, and energy. 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.

Kratom acts like a stimulant in small doses (1-5 g), but an opioid in larger doses (5-15 g). 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.4”

Although taking kratom might reduce anxiety27 short-term, it also highly affects learning, even after a small dose27. Kratom use is linked to losses in learning and memory. Other harmful consequences of kratom use include high blood pressure4, kidney8 and heart problems13, addiction27, seizures7, and liver failure4,12. Kratom is also deadly. There have been 36 deaths linked to kratom7, but there might be more as kratom is not identified in conventional drug tests5.

Kratom is addictive27. 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 psychosis10,18,21,3.

LEGAL STATUS

Kratom is illegal in 16 countries7 including Myanmar, Bhutan, Thailand, Malaysia, Australia, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania19,25. It is legal in the United States and the United Kingdom6,10. 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 shipments7. Individual states including Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Tennessee, and Wisconsin have banned kratom7,4.

According to the FDA, poison control center calls about kratom have increased by 10 times from 2010 to 20157.

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.”
REFERENCES

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