

Kratom Kraze: The Next Drug Trend

You may have seen advertisements or heard radio commercials about Kratom being sold at your local tobacco or head-shop. You may ask yourself, “What exactly is Kratom?”

Kratom is a mind-altering drug that is produced from a tropical tree (*Mitragyna Speciosa*) native to Southeast Asia, with leaves that contain psychoactive opioid compounds. The tree’s bitter leaves are consumed for stimulant/ mood-uplifting effects and pain relief. The leaves and stems are dried and either chewed, brewed or smoked. Low doses have a stimulant effect in the same manner as caffeine while higher doses have opioid-like effects and have been known to cause hallucinations.

Kratom currently is not an illegal substance in the United States, though it has been banned in other countries and/or is listed as a controlled substance that requires a prescription for its use.

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

Individuals are using Kratom to help reduce pain, anxiety and depression, as well as treat symptoms of opioid withdrawal. However, according to the FDA Commissioner, there is no “reliable evidence” to support the use of Kratom as a treatment for opioid-use disorder, and that there are no other FDA-approved uses for Kratom. Rather, he said, the evidence shows that Kratom has similar effects to narcotics like opioids, “and carries similar risks of abuse, addiction and, in some cases, death.” He said that calls to U.S. poison control centers involving Kratom increased tenfold between 2010 and 2015, and that Kratom is associated with side effects including seizures, liver damage and withdrawal symptoms.

While Kratom by itself is not associated with fatal overdose, commercial forms of the drug that are sold in the tobacco/headshops and over the internet are sometimes laced with other compounds that have caused deaths. The FDA has issued a strong warning to consumers to stay away from the herbal supplement Kratom, saying officials are aware of at least 36 deaths linked to products containing the substance. Likewise, there are other reported side effects when using Kratom. Reported health effects of Kratom use include:

- sensitivity to sunburn
- nausea
- itching
- sweating
- dry mouth
- constipation
- increased urination
- loss of appetite
- psychotic symptoms



In addition to the side effects, like other opioid drugs, Kratom may cause dependence (feeling physical withdrawal symptoms when not taking the drug). Some users have reported becoming addicted to Kratom. Some of the reported withdrawal symptoms include:

- muscle aches
- insomnia
- irritability
- hostility
- aggression
- emotional changes
- runny nose
- jerky movements



It should be noted, the FDA said it is working to prevent Kratom from entering the US. But the drug is currently legal in 43 states (Nebraska included) as it awaits a final decision from the FDA on how to classify the drug.

For more information about Kratom please visit the websites below.

<https://americanaddictioncenters.org/Kratom>

<https://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/PublicHealthFocus/ucm584952.htm>

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/Kratom>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/.../fda-warns-of-deadly-risks-of-herb-Kratom-citing-36>

<https://nypost.com/2017/11/18/fda-finally-rules-on-kratom-its-a-potential-killer>

www.scipnebraska.com