

What is kratom?

Kratom is a tropical tree (*Mitragyna speciosa*) native to Southeast Asia, with leaves that contain compounds that can have psychotropic (mind-altering) effects.

Kratom is not currently an illegal substance and has been easy to order on the internet. It is sometimes sold as a green powder in packets labeled "not for human consumption." It is also sometimes sold as an extract or gum.

Kratom sometimes goes by the following names:

- Biak
- Ketum
- Kakuam
- Ithang
- Thom

How do people use kratom?

Most people take kratom as a pill, capsule, or extract. Some people chew kratom leaves or brew the dried or powdered leaves as a tea. Sometimes the leaves are smoked or eaten in food.

How does kratom affect the brain?

Kratom can cause effects similar to both opioids and stimulants. Two compounds in kratom leaves, mitragynine and 7- α -hydroxymitragynine, interact with opioid receptors in the brain, producing sedation, pleasure, and decreased pain, especially when users consume large amounts of the plant. Mitragynine also interacts with other receptor systems in the brain to produce stimulant effects. When kratom is taken in small amounts, users report increased energy, sociability, and alertness instead of sedation. However, kratom can also cause uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous side effects.

What are the health effects of kratom?

Reported health effects of kratom use include:

- nausea
- itching
- sweating
- dry mouth
- constipation
- increased urination
- loss of appetite
- seizures
- hallucinations

Symptoms of psychosis have been reported in some users.

Can a person overdose on kratom?

Kratom by itself is not associated with fatal overdose, but some forms of the drug packaged as dietary supplements or dietary ingredients can be laced with other compounds that have caused deaths.

Is kratom addictive?

Like other drugs with opioid-like effects, kratom might cause dependence, which means users will feel physical withdrawal symptoms when they stop taking the drug. Some users have reported becoming addicted to kratom. Withdrawal symptoms include:

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

How is kratom addiction treated?

There are no specific medical treatments for kratom addiction. Some people seeking treatment have found behavioral therapy to be helpful. Scientists need more research to determine how effective this treatment option is.

Does kratom have value as a medicine?

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 opioids or to other addictive substances such as alcohol. There is no scientific evidence that kratom is effective or safe for this purpose.

Points to Remember

- Kratom is a tropical tree native to Southeast Asia, with leaves that can have psychoactive effects.
- Kratom is not currently illegal and has been easy to order on the internet.
- Most people take kratom as a pill or capsule. Some people chew kratom leaves or brew the dried or powdered leaves as a tea. Sometimes the leaves are smoked or eaten in food. Two compounds in kratom leaves, mitragynine and 7- α -hydroxymitragynine, interact with opioid receptors in the brain, producing sedation, pleasure, and decreased pain.
- Mitragynine can also interact with other receptor systems in the brain to produce stimulant effects.
- Reported health effects of kratom use include nausea, sweating, seizures, and psychotic symptoms.
- Commercial forms of kratom are sometimes laced with other compounds that have caused deaths.
- Some users have reported becoming addicted to kratom.
- Behavioral therapies and medications have not specifically been tested for treatment of kratom addiction.