

Kratom Info Sheet

What is kratom and how does it work?

Kratom is an herbal plant that works by attaching to opioid receptors in the brain. Natural, dried kratom leaves contain very small quantities of a compound called 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH). 7-OH can be isolated and concentrated to create high-potency synthetic products with rapid-onset effects. At low doses, kratom products produce activating effects, while higher doses result in pain-reducing and sedating effects.



Kratom can be found as a whole-leaf product, powder, concentrated extract/tincture, blended with other products, or as a kratom-derived synthetic product. Products are usually taken by mouth as a pill, tea, or chewed leaves, but can also be inhaled. Because of the limited regulation of kratom products, their composition and potency can vary widely.

Risks

Unwanted effects of kratom use can include dry mouth, delusional thinking, psychosis, itching, constipation, seizures, excessive urination, and sweating.

Overdose can occur, particularly when using high-potency synthetic 7-OH products, using kratom products that are mixed with unknown substances, and/or using other substances alongside kratom products, especially opioids, alcohol, benzodiazepines, or other sedatives.

Physical dependence develops when a person takes kratom often and consistently so that when they stop taking it, they experience unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. Many people take kratom and don't realize that it could be harmful or that dependence can occur.

Withdrawal can occur when regular or daily kratom use is stopped. People experience symptoms similar to opioid withdrawal, such as anxiety, agitation, muscle spasms, runny nose, hot flashes, loss of appetite, diarrhea, restlessness, and fever.

Treatment

- Kratom use disorder can be treated with the same medications used to treat opioid use disorder, such as buprenorphine. Kratom withdrawal can also be treated similarly to opioid withdrawal.
- It is important for healthcare teams to be informed about kratom use and concurrent use of opioids (like fentanyl, heroin, oxycodone, or methadone) to provide appropriate treatment.
- In addition to medications for opioid use disorder, counseling and mutual support groups are effective treatments to support recovery.

To get connected to help, call or text "HOPE" to 800-327-5050 to reach the MA Substance Use Helpline

