

Kratom

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1 Kratom (*Mitragyna speciosa* Korth.) is a herbal product from Southeast Asia with opioid agonist properties

Kratom is a herbal product that is most commonly obtained as a powder and consumed as a beverage.¹⁻³ Kratom contains the indole alkaloid compounds mitragynine and 7-hydroxymitragynine, which are opioid receptors agonists.^{2,3} They reduce pain, cause dose-dependent stimulant and sedative effects, and have an adverse effect profile consistent with opioid activity.² Kratom is not detected on conventional urine drug-screening tests.²



2 Kratom use is increasing

Avoidance of drug withdrawal, treatment of chronic pain and recreation are common reasons for kratom use.^{1,2} American poison centres saw an increase in kratom-related calls, from 18 exposures in 2011 to 357 in the first 7 months of 2018.⁴ The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identified 91 cases in which kratom was identified as a potential cause of death from July 2016 to December 2017.⁵

3 Effects of kratom use appear to be dose dependent

Kratom use is associated with stimulant effects at low doses (1–5 g), and sedative effects at higher doses (5–15 g).² Negative adverse effects most commonly include gastrointestinal symptoms and agitation, and are reported to be dose dependent.^{1,4}

4 Kratom users may experience withdrawal with cessation

Moderate to heavy daily users of kratom (≥ 3 doses/d) commonly have cravings and withdrawal symptoms similar to those of opioid withdrawal with cessation.^{2,5} Of kratom users, 43% reported negative adverse events if they abstained for more than 48 hours.¹

5 Management of kratom ingestion is supportive

Doses in excess of 15 g may mimic an opioid toxidrome. Naloxone should be given for drowsiness and respiratory depression.³ Severe adverse events, including death, have been reported with kratom use in conjunction with opioids, benzodiazepines, modafinil and other medications.^{2,5} Supportive management and toxicology consultation are indicated for cases of overdose or intoxication.

References

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