

The Kratom User's Guide

*The statements below have not been evaluated by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA).
Information regarding the use of kratom in folk medicine is provided for education purposes only,
it is not intended as medical advice.*

What is kratom?

Kratom is a tree native to Southeast Asia (Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar [Burma], and elsewhere). Its botanical name is *Mitragyna speciosa*. Kratom is in the same family as the coffee tree (Rubiaceae). The leaves of kratom have been used as an herbal drug from time immemorial by peoples of Southeast Asia. It is used in folk medicine as a stimulant (at low doses), sedative (at high doses), recreational drug, pain killer, medicine for diarrhea, and treatment for opiate addiction.

How is it taken?

In Thailand, kratom leaves are often chewed fresh (usually after removing the stringy central vein). Dried leaves can also be chewed, but since they are a bit tough, most people prefer to crush them up or powder them so that they can be swallowed. Powdered kratom can be mixed with fruit juice or apple sauce. This partially masks the taste and allows it to be quickly swallowed. Dried kratom leaves are often made into a tea that is strained and then drunk (this is the most frequently used method in the West). Kratom can be smoked, but doing so has no advantage over chewing or making a tea from it. The amount of leaf that constitutes a typical dose is too much to be smoked easily. A paste-like extract can be prepared by lengthy boiling of fresh or dried leaves. This can be stored for later use. Small pellets of this extract can be swallowed, or it can be dissolved in hot water and consumed as a tea. Some people like to mix kratom tea with ordinary black tea, or other herbal teas, before it is consumed. This is done to make it more palatable. Sugar or honey can be added to sweeten it.

How does one make kratom tea?

Following is a basic recipe for making kratom tea. This recipe makes enough tea for 8 to 16 mild doses, 4 medium-strength doses, or two moderately strong doses (see "dosage guidelines" below):

- 1.) Take 50 grams of dried, crushed kratom leaves and put into a pot. To this add 1 liter of water.
- 2.) Boil gently for 15 minutes.
- 3.) Pour the tea through a strainer into a bowl and reserve the liquid.
(squeeze the leaves in the strainer to get most of the liquid out).
- 4.) Put the leaves back in the pot and add another liter of fresh water. Repeat steps 2 and 3.
(after the leaves have been strained a second time, they can be discarded.)
- 5.) Put the combined liquid from both boilings back into the pot and boil until the volume is reduced to about 100 ml.

The idea is to boil the tea down to a small volume so that each individual dose can be quickly swallowed. You can boil it down to whatever concentration you are comfortable with. Be careful near the end of the process.

If it starts to become syrupy, it may spatter and/or burn.)

The tea is bitter tasting. To minimize the unpleasant taste, gulp it down quickly and then immediately chase it with some pleasant-tasting fruit juice.

The same general preparation method can of course be used with larger or smaller amounts of herb by simply adjusting the volume of water used. Kratom tea can be safely stored in the refrigerator for about five days. It is probably okay to keep it a bit longer, but it's better to play it safe and not drink it after five days. It can be stored for many months if you add some alcohol to it. Adding about 10% alcohol will preserve it for many months (in the refrigerator). That is one part 80 proof liquor (vodka, rum, or a similar spirit) to three parts kratom tea.

What are the effects?

Kratom is a rather unique drug in that a low to moderate dose will usually (but not always) be stimulating, while a high dose is almost always quite sedating. This is apparently because the active alkaloids have both stimulant and sedative effects. Which predominates probably depends both on blood level and individual differences between users.

The stimulant level: At the stimulant level the mind is more alert, physical energy and sometimes sexual energy is increased, ability to do hard monotonous physical work may be improved, one is more talkative, friendly, and sociable. Some people find this level edgy rather than pleasant.

The sedative-euphoric-analgesic level: At this dosage you will be less sensitive to physical or emotional pain, feel and look calm, have a general feeling of comfortable pleasure, and may enter a pleasant dreamy reverie. You may experience some itching or sweating. Your pupils may be constricted (small). It is possible you may feel nauseated, but if you lie down and relax the nausea should quickly cease. You may find your appreciation of music is increased. It will be very pleasant to lie down on your back in a semi-darkened room, with eyes closed, and just listen to your favorite music. If you do this you may be fortunate enough to enter the delightful mixed-state of 'waking-dreaming' where you have one foot in dreamland and the other foot in the real world. This state was much prized by the 19th century Romantic writers, who, lacking knowledge of kratom, resorted to the much more habit-forming narcotic, opium, to achieve it. The effects of kratom usually last about six hours. The higher the dose, the stronger the effects, and the longer they last. Many people report a positive 'afterglow' the next day.

What effects are associated with different doses? (dosage guidelines)

2-6 grams = mild effects (typically the effects are stimulant-like)

7-15 grams = medium strength effects (the effects can be stimulant-like or sedative-euphoric-analgesic)

16-25 grams = strong effects (sedative-euphoric-analgesic effects; too strong for highly sensitive people)

26-50 grams = very strong effects (sedative-euphoric-analgesic effects; TOO STRONG FOR MOST PEOPLE)

Caution: These dosage guidelines apply to kratom leaves (not extracts). People vary in sensitivity to kratom, and different batches of kratom vary in potency (sometimes quite a lot), so these dosage estimates should be regarded as loose approximations. One should always start with a low dose when experimenting with a new batch of kratom. One can then increase the dose gradually with subsequent experiments until one obtains the desired level of effects. DO NOT take a strong, or very strong dose, the first time you are sampling a new batch of kratom. Most people experience nausea when using doses above 25 grams. Sensitive individuals may experience nausea at lower doses, but usually not at doses below 10 grams. For this reason, it is best to take kratom on an empty stomach when using strong doses (i.e. wait about 3 hours after eating). Some people are hypersensitive to kratom, and may experience adverse reactions (such as severe and prolonged vomiting) when using strong doses.

What are the risks? How safe is it?

When kratom is taken by itself (without mixing it with other drugs), the greatest risk is falling asleep while engaged in hazardous activities. NEVER drive while under the influence of kratom, even if you feel stimulated, rather than sleepy, for sleepiness may come on you without warning. Use common sense. Do not use power tools or climb ladders while under the influence of kratom. Be careful not to leave a pot on a lit stove and then fall asleep.

Pregnant women should not take any drug or medication except on medical advice. Since there have been no studies of the risks of kratom use by pregnant women, it is not known whether it could cause birth defects or fetal death. We strongly recommend that any woman who could possibly be pregnant NOT use kratom.

Is kratom habit forming?

Although a small number of people have become dependent on kratom (primarily in Thailand), kratom is not habit forming when it is used responsibly. If used occasionally as a recreational drug, rather than daily, there is virtually no risk of becoming dependent on it. But it is very important not to get into the habit of using it every day. For kratom, like many drugs [e.g. alcohol, coffee, tobacco, etc.] if used on a daily basis for a prolonged period of time, could become a habit hard to break. IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO USE KRATOM EVERY DAY. Before starting to experiment with it set yourself usage guidelines. If you EVER find it is hard to stay within your usage guidelines immediately quit using kratom.

What are safe usage guidelines?

It is best to err on the side of caution. Therefore, we recommend that people not use Kratom more than once a week. Preferably, no more than once or twice a month. This will insure that Kratom does not become a habit. In other words, kratom should be reserved as a special, but OCCASIONAL treat. By using it infrequently, you will avoid habituation and get more pleasure from it.

Are there any reported health problems?

Health problems are unlikely unless one is consuming large quantities of kratom every day. In Thailand, where there are some people who use kratom every day, those dependent on it can develop weight loss, dark pigmentation of the face, and have physical withdrawal symptoms if they quit abruptly. The withdrawal symptoms may include muscle aches, irritability, crying, runny nose, diarrhea, and muscle jerking. Health problems are unlikely to occur in occasional kratom users. Like any drug or medicine, people's reactions vary and some people could possibly have an allergic or other unusual reaction to kratom, even if they used it responsibly.

Can kratom be combined safely with other substances?

In general, combining drugs can be risky. We recommend that kratom not be combined with yohimbine, cocaine, amphetamine-like drugs, or large doses of caffeine, because of the possibility of over-stimulation or increased blood pressure. We recommend that kratom not be combined with large amounts of alcohol, with benzodiazepines, opiates (other than possible use with red poppy tea—see below), or any other drugs that depress the nervous system. This is because of the possibility that such combinations might cause over-sedation or even possible respiratory depression (not breathing). We recommended that kratom not be combined with Syrian rue, *Banisteriopsis caapi*, or any other MAO inhibitor drug. Serious, even fatal, reactions can occur if MAO inhibitor drugs are combined with monoamine drugs. The combination of MAO inhibitor drugs with kratom, which contains monoamine alkaloids, has not been studied.

Certain combinations have been reported by users to be pleasant and supposedly safe. Kratom can certainly be combined with ordinary tea without risk. It has been used with a tea made from red poppy flowers (*Papaver rhoeas*), which itself has an extremely mild narcotic effect, and with a sedating-euphoriant tea made from 'blue lotus' (*Nymphaea caerulea*). It has been safely combined with SMALL quantities of alcohol, however large quantities of alcohol must be avoided. Some people report they like to smoke tobacco or cannabis while under the influence of kratom. But anyone smoking under the influence of kratom must be very careful not to nod off and drop lit smoking materials.

What is kratom's legal status?

Kratom is illegal in Australia, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), and Thailand (these countries impose sever penalties for possession of the herb). It is legal in most other countries, including the United States and all of Europe. Laws can and do change, so be sure that kratom is legal where you live before using it.

What are kratom's active constituents?

There are many closely-related tryptamine alkaloids in kratom. The most important ones are mitragynine and 7-hydroxymitragynine. These are primarily responsible for kratom's pain relieving, sedative, euphoric, and stimulating effects. These alkaloids resemble yohimbine in structure, but do not have the same effects.

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(The most recent version can always be found at: <http://sagewisdom.org/kratomguide.html>)