



Clinical Addiction Research and Education

Kratom Use Disorder

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32-year-old male presents requesting help stopping his use of 7-OH – he has been buying it from his local corner store for the past six months and when he ran out recently, realized he couldn't make it a day without it without significant withdrawal symptoms.

What are 7-OH and kratom and how do we treat associated use disorders?



What are kratom and 7-OH?

- *Mitragynia speciosa* plant
- Endemic to Southeast Asia
- Historically chewed, smoked, brewed
- Main alkaloid = mitragynine → 7-OH mitragynine
- 7-OH mitragynine (“7-OH”, “7-HMG”)
 - 10-40x more potent than kratom
 - 3x more potent than morphine



Medscape.com. *Legal morphine - the rise of kratom and 7-OH in the US.* May 16 2025.; FDA. *7-OH: an assessment of the scientific data and toxicological concerns around an emerging opioid threat..*



Why do people use them?



NBCnews.com

- Stimulant at low doses ; opioid at higher doses
- Historically: antidiarrheal, cough suppressant, energy booster, deworming, analgesic
- In US, being used for:
 - Mood / energy / focus
 - Opioid withdrawal / transition off other opioids
- Typical AEs: nausea, constipation, dizziness, drowsiness
- Case reports: confusion, seizures, hepatotox, respiratory depression, but overdose rare



7OHresellers.com

NIDA. Kratom. Accessed 28 April 2026.



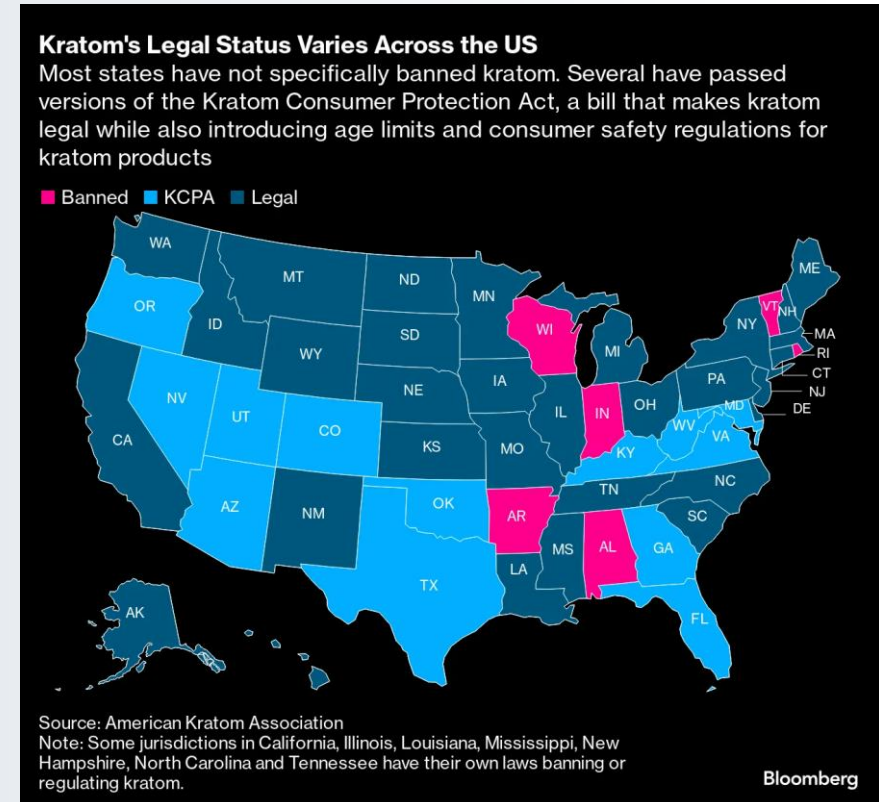
How do they work?

- Partial (mostly) agonist at mu opioid receptor
- Also impacts adrenergic, serotonin, & dopaminergic receptors
- Limited B-arrestin pathway activation thought to be associated w/ decreased respiratory depression
- Renally metabolized



How are they regulated?

- 2016: DEA suggested Schedule 1 for kratom
 - Revoked due to backlash
 - In interim: listed as “drug of concern” by FDA
- Regulated at the state level – about half have regulations
- Can be purchased online, gas stations, etc.
- July 2025: FDA recommending scheduling 7-OH (not kratom) – stay tuned





What are the rates of KUD & how do we treat it?

- SE Asia data suggests dependence in ~half of chronic users
- 2023 survey suggests ~25.5% kratom users w/ active KUD (~half with lifetime KUD)
 - May have fewer severe DSM criteria than w/ other opioids
- Ltd data on treatment – most using bup

AMERSA Talks

Emerging Public Health Crisis: Synthetic Kratom and Novel Psychoactive Substances

Smith et al. Curr Psych Rep. 2024. *Controversies in assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of kratom use disorder.*

What sublingual buprenorphine-equivalent maintenance dose are most of your kratom/7-OH/pseudo patients stabilized on?

Compared to your patients with traditional opioid use disorder (fentanyl, heroin), are your kratom/7-OH/pseudo patients generally maintained on higher buprenorphine doses?

Moderate dose: 8–16 mg/day

Actually lower

Moderate dose: 8–16 mg/day

Actually lower

Moderate dose: 8–16 mg/day

Actually lower

Higher dose: 24–32 mg/day

About the same

Moderate dose: 8–16 mg/day

Actually lower

Moderate dose: 8–16 mg/day

About the same



Take home points

- Kratom & 7OH use are increasing
- 7OH more potent
- Act as partial agonists of mu opioid receptor
- May have some benefit in tapering off other opioids but unclear at this time
- Easy to purchase ; screen for kratom use & UD
- Most experience is with bup for tx; some others using comfort meds only; few using MTD