OVERDOSE RESPONSE CENTER

Delaware Partner Information Bulletin

#2025-08

KRATOM

What is Kratom?

- Kratom (Mitragyna speciosa) is a tropical evergreen tree native to Southeast Asia. Products made from kratom leaves contain active alkaloids which act on opioid receptors, producing stimulant effects at low levels and sedative or opioid-like effects at higher levels.
- Kratom is currently legal and widely available in Delaware (without age restrictions), both online and in retail stores such as gas stations, smoke shops, and convenience stores.
- Kratom regulation is rapidly evolving, and its current legal status in Delaware is not an endorsement of its safety. Twenty-four states currently control or regulate kratom.
- In recent years, our regional Poison Control Center reported 108 cases of exposure and toxicity for kratom or 7-hydroxymitragynine, one of the more potent chemical alkaloids in kratom products. 93 of these cases occurred in Pennsylvania and 15 in Delaware.



Risks Associated with Kratom

- Research on kratom is ongoing. However, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has warned that kratom use poses serious risks and can lead to physical and psychological dependence, as well as Substance Use Disorder.
- Adverse side effects of kratom use can include agitation, anxiety, dizziness, drowsiness, increased blood pressure, hypoxia, insomnia, nausea, respiratory depression, tachycardia (fast heart beat), and vomiting. There have also been reports of psychosis, hallucinations, and seizures.
- Some studies have shown that long-term kratom use can lead to liver damage. Prolonged exposure to kratom before birth can lead to Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS).
- Individuals have attempted to use kratom for opioid withdrawal or as an alternative to other opioids. However, this practice carries significant risks due to kratom's addictive potential and its own withdrawal syndrome.
- Kratom withdrawal consists of physical and psychological withdrawal symptoms similar to opioid withdrawal.
- There are multiple, known, common drug interactions with kratom.





*Source documents are available upon request. Photos taken by ORC staff in Delaware.

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Approved: 29 September 2025

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The Many Forms of Kratom

Kratom is marketed and sold in various forms, each with potentially different potencies and risks:

- Whole-Leaf Products including loose-leaf kratom, may be chewed or brewed in tea. Generally considered less potent than extracts or synthetic forms, however, they are not without risk.
- Blended Products are mixed with other substances (e.g. Kava, caffeine) or other strains of kratom leaf (usually named by leaf color). These additional substances complicate the effects of kratom in the body, and are difficult to measure.
- Extract Products include processed kratom leaves to isolate and concentrate active alkaloids. They are often marketed as "energy boosters" and come in capsules, powders, and liquid extracts. These products can be significantly more potent than whole-leaf products.



- Synthetic Products are laboratory-created synthetic versions of mitragynine and 7-hydroxymitragynine, referred to as "7-OH." In July 2025, the FDA recommended restricting access to some 7-OH products due to potency concerns (more than 10 times more potent than morphine) and associated marketing that could be appealing to children and teens, such as fruit-flavored gummies and ice cream cones containing 7-OH.

Treatment Provider Awareness

Screening: Given the growing prevalence of kratom use and risks, providers are encouraged to screen for Kratom Use Disorder (KUD), identify potential drug interactions, and manage withdrawal risks. It is recommended to ask questions to identify specific kratom products used. Most standard Urine Drug Screen panels do not include kratom. However, they can be requested and followed with confirmatory testing to detect specific kratom alkaloids.

Treatment: Should be individualized to specific presentation, preferences, and comorbidities, such as Opioid Use Disorder (OUD), commonly seen in patients with KUD.



- **Withdrawal management:** Kratom withdrawal can result in Post-Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (a prolonged withdrawal phase), with opioid-typical symptoms, including muscle aches, stomach discomfort, irritability, anxiety, depression, cravings, and chronic fatigue. Symptoms may persist for weeks after an individual stops using kratom. As symptoms are similar to opioid withdrawal, symptomatic management is considered the best approach.
- **Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD):** Providers should consider using MOUD, specifically buprenorphine or buprenorphine-naloxone, which have some published evidence in KUD. In a patient with comorbid OUD, methadone and naltrexone could also be used as appropriate

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