



THE KRATOM COMPANION



*A Clear Guide to Kratom
and Its Potential Benefits*



KratomOnlineUSA.com



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Published by **Kratom Online USA**

kratomonlineusa.com

First edition · 2026

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If you are struggling

If you are using kratom, or considering it, to manage withdrawal from another substance, or if your use has stopped feeling like a choice, the SAMHSA National Helpline is free, confidential and open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year: **1-800-662-4357**. It does not ask for your name.

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How to Use This Book

INTRODUCTION

Kratom is unusually badly served by the internet. It sits in a regulatory grey zone, so most of what gets written about it is either vendor copy treating it as a miracle or scare pieces treating it as a narcotic. Neither helps if you are simply trying to work out whether a product is legitimate, whether it is legal where you live, and whether it is worth the price.

This book is an attempt to write the thing that was missing: a single, honest account of what kratom is, what it appears to do, what it can cost you, and what the industry around it looks like when you turn the lights on. It is organised into four moods, because kratom genuinely has four.

The beautiful is the plant itself and the several hundred years of ordinary human use behind it — farm labourers in Southeast Asia chewing fresh leaves to get through a shift, long before anyone had isolated an alkaloid or written a statute.

The good is what people report it does for them: pain that becomes manageable, mornings that start without a fight, an evening where the noise in your head finally quiets down. Millions of Americans use it, and most of them are not in crisis. They are people who found something that helped.

The bad is real and it is under-discussed by the people selling it. Kratom can be habit-forming. It has a withdrawal syndrome. It interacts with medication in ways that matter. It is not a herbal tea with no consequences, and anyone who tells you otherwise is either uninformed or selling something.

The ugly is not really about the plant at all. It is about an industry that grew up without regulation, where the documented harms in the United States have overwhelmingly involved contamination and adulteration rather than kratom itself. This is the part that should shape how you buy, and it is the part vendors are least keen to discuss.

What this book will not do

It will not tell you that kratom treats, cures or prevents any condition, because that claim is both illegal to make and unsupported by the evidence. It will not give you a dose for a medical problem. It will not pretend the research is settled when it is thin, and it will not pretend kratom is dangerous when the evidence says the danger usually came from the bottle rather than the leaf.

What it will do is give you enough understanding to ask better questions — of a vendor, of a lab report, and of your own use.

A NOTE ON THE LINKS

Every chapter ends with links to fuller treatments on kratomonlineusa.com. This book is the map; the site is the territory. The links are live — tap or click them in your PDF reader. If you are reading a printed copy, the paths are written out so you can type them.

START HERE ON THE SITE

- [The Kratom Strains Guide](#) — the single best starting point
- [First-Time Buyer's Guide](#)
- [Legal Status by State](#) — kept current

PART ONE

The Beautiful

*A tree in the coffee family, the people who have always used it,
and the chemistry underneath.*

A Leaf With a Long Memory

CHAPTER ONE

Kratom is *Mitragyna speciosa*, an evergreen tree that grows thirty to eighty feet tall in the humid lowlands of Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar and Papua New Guinea. It belongs to the Rubiaceae family, which makes it a botanical relative of coffee and of cinchona, the tree that gave the world quinine. That family resemblance is not a curiosity. It is a useful mental model: like coffee, kratom is a plant whose effects ordinary people have folded into ordinary working life for a very long time.

The leaves are large, glossy and deeply veined, and it is the veins that the modern market has made so much of. On the tree they are simply leaves. Harvested, dried and milled, they become the powder that most kratom products start life as.

How it was actually used

The traditional pattern is unglamorous and worth knowing, because it is so different from the way kratom is sold in America. Farm and forest labourers in southern Thailand and peninsular Malaysia chewed fresh leaves — typically stripping the central vein first — through the working day. The effect they were after was endurance: the ability to keep working in heat, with less fatigue and less pain from the work itself. Others brewed the leaves into a bitter tea.

Used this way, the doses were modest and spread across hours. Kratom was not a recreational drug in this context. It was closer to what strong coffee is to a night-shift nurse: a working tool.

It also had a social and ceremonial life — offered to guests, used in local medicine for cough, diarrhoea, muscle pain and, notably, as a folk

treatment for opium dependence. That last use is the oldest thread of an argument still running today.

A century of prohibition, then reversal

Thailand banned kratom in 1943 under the Kratom Act. The reasons were substantially economic rather than medical: kratom use cut into the government's opium revenues, and a cheap domestic plant competing with a taxed monopoly was a problem. The ban stood for the better part of eighty years.

It did not stop use. In 2018 Thailand legalised kratom for medical purposes, and in 2021 it removed kratom from its narcotics list entirely, decriminalising cultivation and sale. Thousands of prisoners held on kratom offences were released. A country with more direct experience of the plant than any other looked at eighty years of prohibition and decided it had been a mistake.

That is not a decisive argument for anything — countries get drug policy wrong in both directions — but it is a data point that rarely makes it into American coverage.

WORTH HOLDING ONTO

The traditional pattern was **fresh leaf, modest amounts, spread through a working day**. Most of the trouble reported in the West involves concentrated extracts taken in single large doses. When you read that kratom has been used safely for centuries, that claim is about the first pattern, not the second.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [Is kratom natural?](#)
- [How to pronounce kratom](#)
- [Kratom tea — the traditional preparation](#)
- [Thai kratom](#) and [Indonesian kratom](#)

What Is Actually In the Leaf

CHAPTER TWO

A kratom leaf contains more than forty identified alkaloids. Two of them do most of the work that people notice, and understanding the difference between them explains almost everything about why kratom behaves the way it does — and why the extract aisle is where the industry’s problems live.

Mitragynine

Mitragynine is the most abundant alkaloid in the leaf, typically making up around one to two per cent of dried leaf material. It is the compound that product labels quote, and the one that laboratory certificates measure.

Its pharmacology is genuinely unusual, and this is the part most coverage flattens into “it’s an opioid”. Mitragynine is a **partial agonist** at the mu-opioid receptor. It also acts as an *antagonist* at the kappa-opioid receptor, and it has activity at adrenergic, serotonergic, dopaminergic and adenosine receptors. That last cluster is why low doses feel stimulating rather than sedating — the effect profile is not a straight line from “a little opioid” to “a lot of opioid”.

The phrase *partial agonist* is doing real work in that sentence. A full agonist like morphine or fentanyl can keep driving a receptor response upward until breathing stops. A partial agonist has a ceiling: past a certain point, more drug does not produce more effect. In animal studies mitragynine produced a small, non-life-threatening reduction in respiratory rate that did not deepen at higher doses — the signature of that ceiling.

DO NOT OVER-READ THIS

A ceiling on respiratory depression is a meaningful pharmacological difference from classical opioids. It is **not** a safety guarantee. It says nothing about dependence, nothing about liver effects, nothing about what happens when kratom is combined with alcohol, benzodiazepines or other depressants — which is the pattern present in the large majority of kratom-associated deaths reported in the United States.

7-hydroxymitragynine

7-hydroxymitragynine, usually written 7-OH, is present in the raw leaf only in trace amounts — commonly well under 0.05 per cent. It is far more potent at the mu-opioid receptor than mitragynine is. The body also produces some 7-OH by metabolising mitragynine after you take it.

In an ordinary leaf product, 7-OH is a bit player. The trouble starts when it is concentrated. Products engineered to contain high levels of 7-OH behave much more like conventional opioids, and they are the reason federal regulators moved on this category in 2025 and 2026 — a story taken up properly in Chapter Twelve.

Why dose changes the character

Kratom is one of the few substances where a smaller amount and a larger amount produce qualitatively different experiences rather than simply more or less of the same one.

RANGE	WHAT USERS TYPICALLY REPORT
Low	Stimulation, alertness, talkativeness, mild focus. Compared most often to coffee.
Moderate	A blend: some lift, some calm, reduced physical discomfort.
High	Sedation, heaviness, nausea in many people. Analgesic effects more prominent.

This is the single most practical fact in the book. A great deal of the disappointment people report — “it made me sick”, “it knocked me out when I wanted energy” — is a dosing problem rather than a product problem.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [What are kratom alkaloids?](#)
- [How kratom works for pain](#)
- [Low-dose kratom: why less is often more](#)
- [The kratom extract guide](#)

Strains, Veins and Marketing

CHAPTER THREE

Walk into any kratom listing and you will meet a vocabulary that sounds botanical and is mostly commercial. Red, white and green. Maeng Da, Bali, Borneo, Malay, Thai, Indo. Gold, Yellow, Trainwreck. It is worth being straight about which parts of this are real.

What the colours mean

The vein colour refers to the colour of the central vein and stem of the leaf at harvest, and to the drying process afterwards. Both are real variables, and both plausibly affect the final alkaloid balance. The general convention across the industry is consistent enough to be useful:

VEIN	CONVENTIONAL PROFILE
White	Most stimulating. Morning and daytime use, focus, energy.
Green	Middle ground. Mild lift with some calm; the usual beginner recommendation.
Red	Most sedating. Evening use, physical discomfort, winding down.
Gold / Yellow	Not a vein colour. A blend or a specialised drying process.

Treat this as a rough guide to what a vendor intends, not as a specification. Two red products from different vendors can differ more from each other than a red and a green from the same batch.

What the place names mean

Less than you would hope. **Bali, Borneo, Malay, Thai, Indo** and **Sumatra** began as geographic descriptors and have become style descriptors. A product labelled Bali is very often not from Bali; the overwhelming majority of kratom entering the United States is grown in Indonesia regardless of what the label says.

Maeng Da is the clearest case. The name translates roughly as “pimp grade” and originated as Thai market slang for premium material. It is a marketing term, not a cultivar. It signals that the vendor considers this their strong product.

THE PRACTICAL UPSHOT

Strain names tell you what a vendor is aiming for. **Only a laboratory certificate tells you what is in the bag.** A vendor with unremarkable strain names and published lab results is a better bet than one with an exotic catalogue and none.

So does any of it matter?

Yes, but less than the market implies and in a specific way. Vein colour is a reasonable first filter for the effect you are after. Beyond that, consistency matters more than variety: a vendor who can make the same product taste and feel the same in March and in October has quality control, and quality control is the thing that actually protects you.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [The complete strains guide](#)
- [Red vein](#) • [White vein](#) • [Green vein](#)
- [What Maeng Da actually means](#)
- [How to choose a strain](#)
- [Best strain for beginners](#)

PART TWO

The Good

What people actually reach for it for, what the evidence supports, and where the honest limits are.

Pain

CHAPTER FOUR

Pain is the single most common reason people give for using kratom, and it is the use with the most plausible mechanism behind it. Mitragynine's partial agonism at the mu-opioid receptor is a real analgesic pathway, and survey after survey of American kratom users puts chronic pain at the top of the list of reasons for use.

It is also the use where the gap between what people report and what has been formally demonstrated is widest. There is, at the time of writing, no large randomised controlled trial of kratom for chronic pain in humans. What exists is animal work showing antinociceptive effects, a coherent pharmacological mechanism, and a very large body of self-report. That is enough to take seriously. It is not enough to call it proven, and this book will not pretend otherwise.

What users consistently describe

The pattern in the self-report literature is reasonably stable. People describe relief that comes on within twenty to forty minutes for powder and faster for liquids, lasts somewhere between three and six hours, and is partial rather than complete — pain that becomes background rather than pain that disappears. Many describe it as taking the edge off enough to function, which is a lower and more believable claim than the one vendors tend to make.

Higher doses are generally reported as more analgesic and more sedating together; the two do not separate cleanly, which is why people using it for daytime pain often end up at a lower dose than they first expect.

The specific presentations people ask about

PRESENTATION	WHERE TO READ MORE
Chronic back pain	Kratom and chronic back pain
Arthritis & joints	Arthritis · Joint pain
Fibromyalgia	Kratom and fibromyalgia
Nerve pain	Neuropathic pain
Muscle soreness	Muscle pain and tension
Inflammation	What the evidence says
Migraine	Kratom and migraines

The comparison people really want

The question underneath most pain enquiries is whether kratom is a safer alternative to prescription opioids. It deserves a careful answer rather than a slogan.

The pharmacological case is that a partial agonist with a ceiling on respiratory depression carries a lower overdose risk profile than a full agonist. The honest counterweight is that kratom is unregulated, so what is in the product is not guaranteed; that it still produces dependence and withdrawal; and that swapping a supervised prescription for an unsupervised botanical means losing the supervision, which for some people is the part that was keeping them safe.

IF YOU ARE ON PRESCRIPTION PAIN MEDICATION

Do not stop, reduce or substitute it based on anything in this book. Combining kratom with prescription opioids is specifically hazardous, and stopping opioids abruptly carries its own risks. This is a conversation for your prescriber.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [Kratom for pain — the main guide](#)
- [Kratom vs prescription painkillers](#)
- [Which strains people use for pain](#)
- [Dosage for pain](#) • [Onset and duration](#)
- [Long-term use for pain — the risks](#)
- [Is kratom safer than opioids?](#)

Energy, Focus and Motivation

CHAPTER FIVE

This is the use closest to kratom's traditional role, and the one where the low-dose stimulant character comes into its own. It is also, for a great many people, the use that works most reliably — partly because the doses involved are small enough to keep side effects minimal.

The mechanism is not the opioid pathway. At low doses the adrenergic and dopaminergic activity dominates, which is why the experience is compared to coffee rather than to a painkiller. People describe alertness without the jitter and edge of a large caffeine dose, a longer runway than an energy drink, and a milder comedown.

The counter-intuitive rule

More kratom does not mean more energy. It means less. The stimulant character belongs to the bottom of the dose range, and people chasing a stronger lift by taking more usually arrive at sedation and nausea instead. If you want the energy effect, the instruction is to take less than feels intuitive and give it a full hour.

A COMMON MISTAKE

Stacking kratom on top of a normal coffee habit. Both raise heart rate; together they can produce a jittery, unpleasant, high-heart-rate state that people then attribute to the kratom alone. If you are trying kratom for energy, cut the caffeine down first so you can tell which is doing what.

What people use it for in practice

- **Morning routine** — as a coffee replacement or partial substitute.

- **Focused work** — sustained concentration on a single task.
- **Physical work and training** — endurance through effort, the traditional use in modern clothes.
- **Night shifts** — staying functional through hours the body wants to sleep.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [Kratom for energy — the main guide](#)
- [How the energy effect works](#)
- [Kratom vs coffee](#) • [Taking both together](#)
- [Focus at work](#) • [Studying](#) • [Motivation](#)
- [As a pre-workout](#) • [For athletes](#)
- [Building a morning routine](#)
- [Night shift work](#)

Anxiety, Stress and Mood

CHAPTER SIX

After pain and energy, this is the third pillar of self-reported kratom use, and it is the one that requires the most care — both because the conditions involved are serious, and because the relationship between kratom and anxiety runs in both directions.

The plausible mechanism is the serotonergic and adrenergic activity alongside the opioid component; kappa-opioid *antagonism* is also of interest, since kappa agonism is associated with dysphoria. Users describe a lowering of the background hum — less rumination, easier social contact, a body that is not braced.

The direction that gets left out

Kratom can also *cause* anxiety. At higher doses, in caffeine-sensitive people, or when a regular user is between doses, jitteriness, restlessness and genuine anxiety are commonly reported. Rebound anxiety during the tail of a dose is a well-described pattern, and for daily users it can become the thing that drives the next dose — a loop worth recognising early.

THIS MATTERS MORE HERE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE

Anxiety, depression and PTSD are medical conditions with effective, evidence-based treatments. Kratom is not a treatment for any of them, and using it to manage symptoms without support can delay care that would actually help. It must never be combined with antidepressants — particularly SSRIs and MAOIs — without medical advice. If you are in crisis, call or text 988 in the United States.

Where people go looking

CONCERN	WHERE TO READ MORE
General anxiety	How kratom affects anxiety
Social anxiety	Social situations
Panic	Panic attacks
Everyday stress	Stress • Work stress
Low mood	Kratom and depression
PTSD	What users report
Making it worse	When kratom worsens anxiety

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [Kratom for anxiety — the main guide](#)
- [Kratom vs anti-anxiety medication](#)
- [Strains people use](#) • [Dosage](#)
- [Daily use and mental health](#)
- [Can it cause mood swings?](#)

Rest, Sleep and Winding Down

CHAPTER SEVEN

At the sedating end of the dose range, and particularly with red vein products, people use kratom to come down at the end of a day. The reports are mostly about getting *to* sleep rather than sleeping better once there, and that distinction turns out to matter.

Sedation is not the same as sleep architecture. Substances that act on opioid receptors can reduce the quality of sleep even when they shorten the time it takes to fall asleep — less restorative deep sleep, more fragmentation. People who use kratom nightly not uncommonly report sleeping *sooner* but waking unrefreshed, and it is worth watching for that pattern in yourself rather than assuming more sedation means better rest.

There is also a straightforward trap here: using kratom to sleep every night is one of the fastest routes to daily dependence, because it builds a nightly ritual that becomes hard to stop.

Where kava comes in

For pure relaxation, kava is a different plant with a different mechanism — kavalactones acting largely on GABA pathways rather than opioid receptors — and it has more clinical research behind its anxiolytic effects than kratom does. It is not a stimulant at any dose. For someone whose goal is calm rather than pain relief or energy, kava is often the better-matched option, and it is worth knowing that the two are not interchangeable.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [Kratom for sleep · Effects on sleep quality](#)
- [Red vein and relaxation](#)
- [Kava vs kratom · The comparison in detail](#)
- [Kava Shot · Kava & Kratom Blend](#)

PART THREE

The Bad

The costs, stated plainly. This is the section a vendor would rather you skipped.

Side Effects, Honestly

CHAPTER EIGHT

Most people who use kratom at moderate doses report either no side effects or mild ones. That is the honest headline, and it should not be buried. But “mild for most people” is not “harmless”, and the list below is what the case-report literature and the user surveys actually contain.

Common and usually mild

EFFECT	NOTES
Nausea	The most common complaint. Strongly dose-related. Often solved by taking less, or by not taking it on an empty stomach.
Constipation	Predictable from opioid-receptor activity. Frequently the reason long-term users stop.
Dizziness	Usually early, usually dose-related. The “wobbles” users describe.
Dry mouth	Common and harmless.
Sweating	Common, more so at higher doses.
Appetite loss	Frequently reported; occasionally significant with heavy use.
Headache	Often a hydration issue rather than a direct effect.

Less common and more serious

Reported adverse effects in the clinical literature include tachycardia and raised blood pressure — the most frequent acute cardiovascular findings — along with, at the more severe end, seizures, altered mental state, and liver and kidney effects. Those severe outcomes are rare rela-

tive to the size of the user population, and they appear disproportionately in cases involving very high doses, concentrated extracts, or kratom combined with other substances.

An important and often-missed piece of context: reviews of the case-report literature have concluded that the evidence is currently *insufficient* to establish that kratom alone causes severe acute harm, because so many of the reported cases involved other drugs at the same time. That is not an all-clear. It is an accurate statement of an unsatisfying evidence base.

Liver effects

Kratom-induced liver injury is documented, though uncommon. It typically appears within two to eight weeks of starting or escalating use, more often with heavy daily use and concentrated products. The pattern is usually cholestatic: itching, dark urine, pale stools, jaundice, fatigue, right-sided abdominal discomfort. It generally resolves after stopping, but it is a genuine reason to stop and see a doctor rather than push through.

STOP AND SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF YOU DEVELOP

Yellowing of the skin or eyes • dark urine • severe or persistent abdominal pain • chest pain • difficulty breathing • confusion • seizure • a heart rate that will not settle.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [Kratom and the liver](#)
- [Is daily use safe?](#)
- [Daily use and mental health](#)

Tolerance, Dependence and Withdrawal

CHAPTER NINE

This is the chapter that separates an honest guide from a sales page. Kratom can be habit-forming. Regular daily use, particularly at higher doses, produces physical dependence in a meaningful proportion of users, and stopping abruptly after a period of heavy use produces a withdrawal syndrome. None of this is fringe or disputed.

How it develops

Tolerance comes first and it comes quickly — often within weeks of daily use. The dose that worked stops working. The natural response is to take more, and that response is the mechanism by which a manageable habit becomes an unmanageable one. A dose that has been climbing steadily is the single clearest early warning sign available to you, and it is visible long before withdrawal is.

Dependence follows sustained daily use. It is not a moral failure and it is not rare; it is ordinary pharmacology.

What withdrawal looks like

Users and clinicians describe a syndrome that resembles a mild-to-moderate opioid withdrawal: irritability and low mood, muscle aches, insomnia, sweating and chills, runny nose and watering eyes, nausea and stomach cramps, restlessness, and craving. It typically begins within twelve to twenty-four hours of the last dose, peaks over roughly two to four days, and largely settles within a week — though sleep and mood can take longer.

Most descriptions place it as less severe than withdrawal from prescription opioids or heroin. That is genuinely reassuring and it is also not

the point: people underestimate it, are caught out by it, and discover mid-week that stopping is harder than they assumed.

Reducing the risk

- **Do not use it every day.** The most protective single habit. Non-daily use rarely produces significant dependence.
- **Keep the dose flat.** Track it if you need to. A rising dose is the signal.
- **Take breaks deliberately** before you need to, not after.
- **Rotate away from extracts.** Concentrated products build tolerance faster than leaf.
- **Do not use it to manage withdrawal from something else** without medical supervision.

IF YOU WANT TO STOP

Tapering — reducing gradually over weeks rather than stopping dead — is what most people find manageable. If you have been using heavily or for a long time, do it with a doctor's help. The SAMHSA National Helpline is free and confidential, 24/7: **1-800-662-4357**.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [Tolerance and diminishing returns](#)
- [Long-term use](#)
- [Daily use for anxiety](#)

Interactions and Who Should Never Use It

CHAPTER TEN

If you take away one thing from this book, make it this chapter. The overwhelming majority of serious kratom-associated harm reported in the United States has involved kratom taken alongside something else.

The mechanism behind the interactions

Kratom's alkaloids inhibit several cytochrome P450 liver enzymes — CYP2D6 and CYP3A4 among them. Those enzymes metabolise an enormous share of prescription medicines. Inhibiting them means other drugs can build up to higher levels than intended, which is a route to toxicity from a medication you have been taking safely for years. This is not theoretical and it is not dose-trivial.

Combinations to avoid outright

WITH	WHY
Alcohol	Additive sedation and respiratory depression. The single most common factor in kratom-associated deaths.
Opioids	Competing at the same receptor plus additive depression. Specifically hazardous.
Benzodiazepines	Additive sedation. Xanax, Valium, Ativan, Klonopin and relatives.
Sleep medication	Same additive-sedation problem.
MAOIs	Potentially dangerous serotonergic interaction.
SSRIs / SNRIs	Serotonergic risk plus CYP interaction. Medical advice first.
Stimulants	Additive cardiovascular load — heart rate and blood pressure.

Who should not use kratom at all

- Anyone **under 21**.
- Anyone **pregnant, trying to conceive or breastfeeding**. Neonatal withdrawal following maternal kratom use is documented.
- Anyone with **liver or kidney disease**.
- Anyone with **heart disease, arrhythmia or uncontrolled high blood pressure**.
- Anyone with a **seizure disorder**.
- Anyone with a **personal or family history of substance use disorder**, without medical advice.
- Anyone taking any of the medications in the table above, without speaking to a doctor or pharmacist first.

TWO PRACTICAL POINTS

Driving. Do not drive or operate machinery until you know how a product affects you. Sedation at higher doses is real.

Drug testing. Kratom does not show up on a standard five-panel test, but specific kratom panels exist and mitragynine can be detected. If your employment depends on testing, do not assume you are safe.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [Kratom and drug testing](#)
- [Kratom with ibuprofen](#)
- [Can it replace antidepressants?](#)
- [Compared with anti-anxiety medication](#)
- [The full disclaimer](#)

PART FOUR

The Ugly

Not the plant. The industry that grew up around it without anybody watching.

Contamination: The Risk Nobody Advertises

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Here is the fact that should reorganise how you think about kratom safety: the documented harms associated with kratom in the United States have overwhelmingly involved contamination rather than the plant. If you are worried about kratom, the thing to be worried about is what else is in the bag.

Salmonella, 2017–2018

Between January 2017 and May 2018, a multistate outbreak of salmonella was traced to kratom products. **199 people across 41 states** were infected, and **54 were hospitalised**. There were no deaths. Investigators found six different salmonella serotypes involved, which tells you it was not one bad batch from one bad supplier.

The detail that matters most: when the FDA sampled 76 kratom products from points of sale and distributors, **42 of them — 55 per cent — tested positive for salmonella**. Investigators were never able to identify a single common source, meaning contamination was distributed across the supply chain rather than concentrated in one place.

Heavy metals

The FDA later tested 30 kratom products for heavy metals and found levels of **lead and nickel exceeding safe daily oral exposure limits**. The agency's assessment was blunt: based on typical usage patterns, heavy kratom users could be exposed to many times the safe daily level, and a long-term user could plausibly develop heavy metal poisoning

— with consequences including nervous system damage, kidney damage, anaemia, raised blood pressure and increased cancer risk.

Heavy metals are not a manufacturing accident in the way salmonella is. Kratom is a tree that draws from its soil, and soil in some growing regions carries these metals. This is exactly the kind of risk that routine batch testing catches and that no amount of careful handling prevents.

WHY THIS CHAPTER IS THE PRACTICAL ONE

Neither of these risks is visible, smellable or tastable. You cannot inspect your way to safety. The only thing standing between you and them is a **vendor who tests every batch through an independent laboratory and will show you the results**. That is the whole argument for buying carefully, and it is why the next chapters are about paperwork rather than pharmacology.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [The lab testing guide](#)
- [How to judge kratom quality](#)
- [How do I know it is lab tested?](#)
- [Verifying quality yourself](#)

Adulteration, Extracts and the 7-OH Problem

CHAPTER TWELVE

Contamination is what gets into a product by accident. Adulteration is what gets put in on purpose, and it is the more troubling of the two because it implies somebody made a decision.

The pattern

Products sold as kratom have been found containing synthetic opioids, other undeclared drugs, and caffeine or other stimulants added to produce a “stronger” effect. Because the category is unregulated, nothing systematically catches this. A gas station bottle with a cartoon label and no manufacturer address on it is the highest-risk purchase available in this market, and it is also the easiest one to make.

Extracts, and where the industry lost the plot

An extract concentrates the alkaloids from a quantity of leaf into a smaller volume. Used sensibly, that is convenience — the same reason people drink espresso rather than a litre of weak coffee. The problem is that concentration has run far ahead of the traditional pattern of use, and the further a product gets from leaf, the less the centuries of traditional-use reassurance applies to it.

7-OH: the live regulatory story

Recall from Chapter Two that 7-hydroxymitragynine occurs in raw leaf only in traces, typically well below 0.05 per cent, and that it is far more potent at the mu-opioid receptor than mitragynine. Products deliberately enriched with 7-OH — tablets, shots and concentrates — began

appearing widely in American gas stations and smoke shops, and they behave much more like conventional opioids than like leaf.

Regulators responded. The FDA formally recommended in July 2025 that concentrated 7-OH products be placed in Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act. The DEA followed with notices of intent published in July 2026 to temporarily schedule 7-OH above a concentration threshold — set at **0.05 per cent** for plant material, and at 0.05 per cent or 1 milligram per article for synthetically produced or processed products — with the order not taking effect before August 2026.

THE DISTINCTION THAT MATTERS

These federal actions target **concentrated and synthetic 7-OH products**, not natural kratom leaf, which remains federally unscheduled. But this is a fast-moving area. Check [the live legal page](#) rather than relying on any printed summary, including this one.

What this means when you shop

- Be sceptical of anything marketed on potency alone — “ultra”, “extreme”, “knockout”.
- Treat any product advertising elevated 7-OH content as a different category from leaf, with a different risk profile and an unsettled legal status.
- A product that states its mitragynine content in milligrams and backs it with a lab result is telling you something checkable. One that says only “extra strength” is telling you nothing.
- Gas stations and smoke shops are where the worst of this category is sold.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [Understanding extracts · What is an extract?](#)
- [Should you buy kratom at a gas station?](#)
- [Avoiding kratom scams](#)
- [Kratom shots explained](#)

The Regulatory Vacuum

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Kratom occupies an odd legal space in the United States. It is not a controlled substance federally. It is also not an approved food additive or dietary supplement, which means the FDA's position is that it may not lawfully be marketed for consumption at all. It is, in effect, legal to sell and not legal to sell as anything in particular.

The practical consequence is that nobody is inspecting the factory. There is no federal requirement for potency testing, contaminant screening, accurate labelling, good manufacturing practice or age verification. Every one of those protections, where it exists, exists because a vendor chose it or a state legislature imposed it.

What has filled the gap

State Kratom Consumer Protection Acts. More than thirty states have now passed some version of a KCPA. The common provisions are a minimum purchase age of 21, mandatory labelling of alkaloid content, prohibitions on adulterated or synthetically enhanced product, and vendor registration. From a buyer's point of view a regulated state is the best place to be — the labelling requirements alone make it far easier to know what you are buying.

Industry self-certification. The American Kratom Association operates a GMP standards programme, auditing participating vendors annually against manufacturing and testing requirements. It is voluntary and it is the industry regulating itself, which are real limitations. It is also considerably better than nothing, and participation tells you a vendor was willing to be audited.

THE HONEST SUMMARY

In an unregulated market, the vendor is the regulation. That is why this book spends more pages on how to evaluate a seller than on which strain to pick. Choosing well is the highest-leverage decision available to you, and it is almost entirely within your control.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [Is kratom legal? The federal picture](#)
- [What GMP certification means](#)
- [Legal status in all fifty states](#)

PART FIVE

The Practical

*Formats, dosing, laboratory paperwork, buying, and the law
where you live.*

Forms and Formats Compared

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The format you choose changes onset, duration, dose control and, most of all, whether you will actually keep using it. A great many people abandon kratom not because it did not work but because drinking it was unpleasant enough to lose the argument every morning.

FORMAT	ONSET	TRADE-OFF
Powder	30–45 min	Cheapest per dose and the most flexible. Bitter, messy, needs scales.
Capsules	45–60 min	No taste, precise. Slowest, and you may swallow a lot of them.
Stick packs	20–40 min	Pre-measured single servings, flavoured, portable. Costs more than loose powder.
Liquid shots	15–20 min	Fastest. Concentrated, so easiest to overshoot.
Tea	20–40 min	The traditional preparation. Gentler on the stomach; dose is imprecise.
Gummies	30–60 min	Palatable. Often the least transparent about content.

The case for pre-measured formats

Two problems account for most bad first experiences with kratom: people guess the dose, and people find the taste intolerable. Pre-measured, flavoured formats solve both at once, which is why they have taken over the beginner end of the market. You pay a premium per serving for a product that removes the two failure modes most likely to make you quit.

A NOTE ON CONCENTRATION

Powder is milled leaf. An extract stick or shot is concentrated, and the two are not interchangeable by weight. A 5g stick containing 200mg of mitragynine is not “five grams of kratom” in the sense a powder user means — it is a considerably larger alkaloid dose than five grams of leaf. Read the milligrams, not the grams.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [All product types compared](#)
- [Powder vs capsules](#)
- [Making kratom tea](#) · [Taking powder](#)
- [What it tastes like — and what helps](#)
- [The seven products we review](#)

Dosing Without Guesswork

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

This book does not give dosing advice for a medical problem, because appropriate use depends on your physiology, your tolerance and your medication list — none of which can be assessed from a page. What it can give you is the general shape of how dose relates to effect, and the handful of rules that prevent the most common bad outcomes.

The rules that matter

- **Start lower than you think you need.** You can always take more in two hours. You cannot take less once it is down.
- **Wait a full hour before deciding it has not worked.** Redosing too early is the most common cause of nausea and dizziness in new users.
- **One serving at a time.** For the extract formats, do not exceed two servings in any 24-hour period.
- **Do not take it on an empty stomach** the first few times.
- **Weigh powder, do not eyeball it.** Density varies enough that a teaspoon is not a unit.
- **Keep a note for the first fortnight** — amount, time, effect. It answers questions you will otherwise guess at.
- **Watch the trend, not the dose.** A dose that keeps rising is the signal from Chapter Nine.

Onset and duration, roughly

STAGE	TYPICAL TIMING
Onset	15–20 minutes for liquids; 30–45 for powder and stick packs; up to an hour for capsules.
Peak	Around 1 to 1.5 hours.
Duration	Commonly 3 to 6 hours; longer at higher doses.

EXTRACT PRODUCTS

If a product states its mitragynine content in milligrams, that number is the dose that matters — not the weight of the sachet. Someone with no tolerance taking a full high-milligram serving is the classic route to a thoroughly unpleasant first experience. Half is a more sensible start.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [The dosage guide](#) · [Dosage chart by purpose](#)
- [How much should I take?](#)
- [How long effects last](#)
- [The case for staying low](#)

How to Read a Certificate of Analysis

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

A certificate of analysis — a COA — is a laboratory’s report on a specific batch. It is the only document that connects a marketing claim to a measured fact, and being able to read one is the most useful practical skill in this book. It takes about two minutes once you know what you are looking at.

The five checks

1. Is it from an independent laboratory?

Look for a named third-party lab with no ownership relationship to the vendor. An in-house result is a vendor marking their own homework. The lab should be identifiable and ideally ISO 17025 accredited.

2. Does the batch number match your product?

This is the check almost nobody performs and the one that catches the most. A COA for a batch from eighteen months ago tells you nothing about the bag in your hand. The batch or lot number on the certificate should match the one printed on your packaging.

3. Does the alkaloid content match the label?

If the package claims a mitragynine percentage or milligram figure, the certificate should show it. A meaningful gap is disqualifying — not necessarily because the product is unsafe, but because it means the vendor’s quality control cannot be relied on anywhere else either. Check the 7-OH figure too, in light of Chapter Twelve.

4. Are the contaminant panels actually there?

This is the part that protects you from Chapter Eleven. You want to see, and see passing:

- **Heavy metals** — lead, arsenic, cadmium, mercury and ideally nickel.
- **Microbials** — salmonella, E. coli, total plate count, yeast and mould.
- **Pesticides**, where offered.

A certificate showing alkaloid content alone is half a document. Potency is the part the vendor wants to advertise; contamination is the part that can hurt you.

5. Is it recent?

Testing should be per batch, not once in the company's history. A single certificate from three years ago used across an entire catalogue is a red flag dressed up as transparency.

THE SHORTCUT

Ask the vendor for the COA matching your batch number. The *reply* tells you most of what you need. A good vendor sends it within a day. A poor one sends a generic PDF, or a marketing page, or nothing. That single email is the cheapest due diligence available.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [The full lab testing guide](#)
- [Judging quality](#)
- [What to look for when buying](#)

Buying Without Getting Burned

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

In an unregulated market the vendor is the regulation, so this is the decision that matters most. These are the four filters every product on Kratom Online USA has to clear before it is listed at all — and a product that fails any one of them is not listed, whatever commission it pays.

The four filters

Third-party lab testing you can actually see

A certificate from a laboratory with no commercial relationship to the vendor, covering alkaloid content, heavy metals and microbial contamination. “Lab tested” as a marketing phrase, with no document behind it, counts for nothing.

Alkaloid content that matches the label

Where a product states a mitragynine concentration, it should survive comparison with the lab result.

Screening for the risks that actually materialise

Salmonella and heavy metals specifically — the two things that have actually harmed people in this market. Missing screening is a serious mark against a product.

A vendor that behaves like a real company

Verifiable business details, a written returns policy, responsive support, and no claims that kratom treats or cures any condition. A vendor willing to make illegal medical claims has already shown you how seriously they take the rules.

Warning signs

- Medical claims of any kind — “cures anxiety”, “treats withdrawal”. Illegal, and a reliable marker of a vendor who does not care.
- No physical address, no phone, no company name.
- Prices far below the market. Kratom has a floor cost; well below it means something was skipped.
- No batch numbers on packaging.
- Reviews that are uniformly five stars, short, and posted in clusters.
- Pressure tactics — countdown timers, “only 3 left”.
- Marketing built purely on potency.

A REASONABLE FIRST ORDER

Buy the smallest quantity a vendor sells, not the best value per gram. A single sample tells you whether you can tolerate the taste, whether the effect suits you, and whether the company ships properly and answers email. If all three hold, then buy the larger size.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [How to choose a vendor](#)
- [First-time buyer’s guide](#)
- [Avoiding scams · Reading reviews critically](#)
- [What kratom should cost](#)
- [Buying online · Storing it properly](#)
- [How we assess products, and how we are funded](#)

Where It Is Legal, and Where It Cannot Ship

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Kratom is legal in most of the United States, prohibited in a minority of states, and regulated under kratom-specific consumer protection law in a growing number of others. A handful of counties and cities ban it even where their state permits it, and that last category is the one that catches people out.

READ THIS BEFORE YOU RELY ON ANYTHING IN THIS CHAPTER

Kratom law changes frequently and at several levels of government at once. Between 2025 and 2026 alone, at least one state reversed a long-standing ban while others introduced new ones. **A PDF cannot stay current with that.** Treat this chapter as an explanation of the categories, and get the current position from kratomonlineusa.com/legal-status, which is maintained and dated.

The three statuses

Prohibited

The state has scheduled kratom's alkaloids as controlled substances or otherwise banned possession and sale. Buying, possessing or having it shipped to you may carry criminal penalties. Reputable vendors will not ship there — and a vendor willing to is telling you how they treat every other rule.

Regulated

The state permits kratom but governs how it is sold, most commonly through a Kratom Consumer Protection Act: minimum age 21, mandatory labelling of alkaloid content, prohibitions on adulterated or syn-

thetically enhanced product, vendor registration. From a buyer's point of view these are the best states to be in.

Legal, with no kratom-specific statute

Not scheduled, not specifically legislated. Sale and possession are lawful, but there is no state requirement for testing, labelling or age verification — so quality control falls entirely on the vendor, and Chapter Sixteen becomes your only protection.

The local trap

Several counties and cities prohibit kratom while their states allow it — San Diego and Oceanside in California, Sarasota County in Florida, Union County and Columbus in Mississippi, and Jerseyville, Alton and Edwardsville in Illinois among them, with Denver applying its own restrictions. State-level research will not surface these. Check your city and county specifically.

How to check properly, in five minutes

1. Start with the [state-by-state page](#) for the current position and its review date.
2. Search your state legislature's site for recent kratom bills — status can change mid-year.
3. Search your city and county name with “kratom ordinance”.
4. Check the retailer's own restricted-shipping list at checkout.

READ MORE ON THE SITE

- [Legal status in all fifty states — kept current](#)
- [The federal position explained](#)
- [Can it be shipped to my state?](#)
- [Is it legal to buy online?](#)

PART SIX

Reference

Find your question, get the vocabulary, and know where to go next.

The Symptom Finder

CHAPTER NINETEEN

This is the index most people actually want: start from what you are dealing with, and go straight to the fullest treatment of it. Every link goes to a free article on kratomonlineusa.com.

READ THIS FIRST

Listing a symptom here is **not** a claim that kratom treats it. These are the questions people ask most often, answered with what the evidence and the reported experience actually show — including, in several cases, that kratom is a poor choice. None of it substitutes for a doctor.

Pain and physical discomfort

IF YOU ARE DEALING WITH	READ
Chronic back pain	Kratom and chronic back pain
Arthritis	Arthritis pain
Joint pain	Joint pain
Fibromyalgia	Fibromyalgia
Nerve pain	Neuropathic pain
Muscle soreness	Muscle pain
Inflammation	Inflammation
Migraine	Migraines
Pain in later life	Kratom and seniors

Energy, fatigue and focus

IF YOU ARE DEALING WITH

READ

Persistent fatigue	Kratom and fatigue
--------------------	------------------------------------

Brain fog	Brain fog
-----------	---------------------------

Trouble concentrating	Focus at work
-----------------------	-------------------------------

Low motivation	Motivation
----------------	----------------------------

Studying	Kratom and studying
----------	-------------------------------------

Night shifts	Shift work
--------------	----------------------------

Training and the gym	Pre-workout use
----------------------	---------------------------------

Cutting down on coffee	Kratom vs coffee
------------------------	----------------------------------

Anxiety, stress and mood

IF YOU ARE DEALING WITH

READ

General anxiety	Kratom for anxiety
-----------------	------------------------------------

Social anxiety	Social anxiety
----------------	--------------------------------

Panic attacks	Panic attacks
---------------	-------------------------------

Work stress	Work stress
-------------	-----------------------------

Low mood	Depression
----------	----------------------------

PTSD	PTSD
------	----------------------

Anxiety getting worse	When kratom worsens anxiety
-----------------------	---

Wanting calm, not energy	Kava vs kratom
--------------------------	--------------------------------

Sleep and rest

IF YOU ARE DEALING WITH	READ
Trouble getting to sleep	Kratom for sleep
Poor sleep quality	Effects on sleep quality
Winding down	Red vein and relaxation

Safety questions

IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT	READ
Daily use	Is daily use safe?
Tolerance building	Tolerance
Your liver	Liver effects
Drug testing	Kratom and drug tests
Mixing with medication	Who should not use kratom
Product quality	Lab testing guide

Glossary

CHAPTER TWENTY

TERM	MEANING
7-OH	7-hydroxymitragynine. A minor alkaloid in raw leaf, far more potent at the mu-opioid receptor than mitragynine. Concentrated forms are the subject of federal scheduling action.
AKA	American Kratom Association. Trade body; runs a voluntary GMP audit programme.
Alkaloid	A nitrogen-containing plant compound with pharmacological activity. Kratom contains more than forty.
COA	Certificate of Analysis. A laboratory report on one specific batch. See Chapter Sixteen.
CYP450	A family of liver enzymes that metabolise most medicines. Kratom alkaloids inhibit several, which is the basis of its drug interactions.
Extract	A concentrated preparation. Higher alkaloid content per gram than leaf; not interchangeable with powder by weight.
GMP	Good Manufacturing Practice. Standards for sourcing, handling, testing and packaging.
KCPA	Kratom Consumer Protection Act. State legislation; typically sets 21+, labelling rules and a ban on adulterated product.
Maeng Da	Market term meaning roughly “premium”. Not a cultivar or a place.
Mitragynine	The most abundant active alkaloid in kratom leaf. Partial agonist at the mu-opioid receptor.
Partial agonist	A compound that activates a receptor but has a ceiling on its maximum effect — unlike a full agonist such as morphine.
Vein colour	Red, white or green. Refers to the leaf vein at harvest and to drying method; a rough guide to intended effect.

MORE DEFINITIONS

- [Kratom alkaloids explained](#)
- [GMP certification](#)
- [What Maeng Da means](#)
- [Every article on the site](#)

Where to Go Next

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

If you have read this far, you know more about kratom than the large majority of people buying it — which, in an unregulated market, is the protection that actually counts. Here is the short version of everything above.

The ten things worth remembering

- 1. Dose changes the character, not just the intensity.** Low is stimulating, high is sedating. Most disappointment is a dosing error.
- 2. Start lower than you think.** Wait a full hour before deciding.
- 3. Strain names describe intent. Lab results describe contents.**
- 4. The real risk is contamination, not the plant.** Salmonella and heavy metals have harmed people; buy accordingly.
- 5. Read the COA, and check the batch number.** Two minutes, and almost nobody does it.
- 6. Never combine it with alcohol, benzodiazepines or opioids.** That combination is the pattern in most serious cases.
- 7. Daily use leads to dependence.** A dose that keeps rising is your early warning.
- 8. Extracts are a different category from leaf** — read milligrams, not grams.
- 9. Check your city and county, not just your state.**
- 0. 21 and over. Never in pregnancy. Always tell your doctor.**

Keep reading

THE GUIDES WORTH YOUR TIME

- [The Kratom Strains Guide](#)
- [Kratom for Pain](#) • [For Anxiety](#) • [For Energy](#) • [For Sleep](#)
- [The Lab Testing Guide](#)
- [The Dosage Guide](#)
- [Legal Status by State](#)
- [All 118 guides](#) • [121 direct answers](#)

The products we have vetted

Every product on the site has cleared the four filters in Chapter Seventeen. We do not sell or ship any of them — we read the lab work and link to the retailer that does.

WHAT PASSED

- [Kratom Stick Pack Extra Strength](#) — 200mg per 5g stick, in six flavours
- [Kratom Stick Pack](#) — standard strength, pre-measured
- [Kratom Shot](#) • [Extra Strength](#) — fastest onset
- [Kava Shot](#) — kava, not kratom; for calm rather than energy
- [Kava & Kratom Blend](#)
- [Compare everything side by side](#)

Ask us anything

There is a free assistant on every page of the site. It answers from the 300-odd articles published there — legality in your state, what to start with, dosing, safety — and it will tell you when it does not know. If you would rather write to a human, use the [contact form](#). If you find something in this book that is wrong or out of date, tell us and we will correct it.

ONE LAST TIME

This book is for adults 21 and over. It is not medical advice, and kratom is not approved by the FDA for any medical use. Speak to a doctor before using it — especially if you are pregnant, take prescription medication, or have a liver, kidney or heart condition. If your use has stopped feeling like a choice, the SAMHSA National Helpline is free, confidential and open 24/7: 1-800-662-4357.

The Kratom Companion

A Clear Guide to Kratom and Its Potential Benefits

Published by **Kratom Online USA**
Independent kratom research and buying guidance

kratomonlineusa.com

First edition, 2026

Free to read. Free to share, complete and unmodified.

We do not sell kratom. We read the lab work.