

Lane County Health Department warns against use of kratom

“All-natural” product marketed for its healing properties has been linked to 36 deaths

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a strong warning last week to consumers to stay away from the botanical product known as kratom, citing 36 deaths linked to products containing the substance.

Since kratom has not been approved by the FDA for many of the uses it is being advertised for and is available in Lane County without age restriction, Lane County Public Health (LCPH) is urging residents not to purchase or use kratom until the FDA has made a final determination on its safety.

“While there is a growing body of evidence which suggests kratom can be harmful and even fatal, the most troubling aspect is what we don’t know,” said Senior Community Health Analyst, Elisabeth Maxwell.

“Products such as kratom which have clearly demonstrated potency and some level of toxicity need to undergo the level of testing which will insure the safety of those who choose to use it.”

Kratom is a plant that grows naturally in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.

It has gained popularity in the U.S., with some marketers touting it as a “safe” treatment with broad healing properties.

Proponents argue that it’s a safe substance largely because it’s a plant-

based product. The FDA knows people who are serious medical conditions that require proper diagnosis and oversight from a licensed health care provider. This substance is being actively marketed and distributed for these purposes. Importantly, evidence shows that kratom has similar effects to narcotics like opioids, and carries similar risks of abuse, addiction and in some cases, death. Thus, it’s not surprising that often kratom is taken recreationally by users for its euphoric effects. Since the nation has hit a critical point in the opioid epidemic, the increasing use of kratom as an alternative or adjunct to opioid use is extremely concerning.

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— Name County Health Dept.

The herb is banned in several states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Tennessee and Wisconsin. Currently, the FDA is treating kratom as an unapproved drug and also has taken action against kratom-containing dietary supplements. Meanwhile, the FDA is working to prevent shipments of kratom from entering the country.

“Our primary concern is for the safety of the people of Lane County,” added Lane County Chief Health Officer, Dr. Patrick Luedtke. “If in the future, studies indicate a safe and effective way for people to use kratom for a medically beneficial purpose we will reevaluate, but at this point the potential loss of life is too great of risk for us not to warn folks.”



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