

Khat●

What is khat?

Khat is a stimulant drug, which means it speeds up the messages going between the brain and the body. Chewing khat is part of some social traditions in parts of the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and in Eastern Africa, such as Somalia.^{1,2}

The buds and leaves of the khat plant (*Catha edulis*) are chewed for stimulant and euphoric effects, and traditionally have been used for medicinal purposes as well as recreationally.¹ Khat contains cathinone and cathine, which are the chemicals that produce the stimulant effects.²

Other names

Qat, kat, chat, qaad.

Other types of stimulants

- Amphetamines
- Betel nut
- Caffeine
- Cocaine
- Ice
- Mephedrone
- Nicotine
- Synthetic cathinones

What does it look like?

The leaves and buds of the khat plant, either fresh or dried. They have a mild aroma and an astringent, faintly sweet taste.^{1,3}

How is it used?

Khat leaves and buds can be chewed fresh, but may also be preserved by wrapping freshly picked khat in banana leaves, and then used dried.¹

Effects of khat

There is no safe level of drug use. Use of any drug always carries some risk. It's important to be careful when taking any type of drug.

Khat affects everyone differently, based on:

- size, weight and health
- whether the person is used to taking it
- whether other drugs are taken around the same time
- the amount taken.

Short term effects may include:

- increased talkativeness
- feeling energetic and social
- alertness and improved concentration
- faster heartbeat and breathing
- slightly higher temperature and blood pressure
- reduced appetite.¹⁻³

Long-term, regular use of khat may increase the risk of:

- worsening of existing mental health conditions
- sleep-related issues
- liver disease
- fertility problems, such as impotence and lower sperm count
- digestive problems such as constipation
- sore, inflamed mouth
- psychological dependence
- mouth cancer.¹⁻³

Withdrawal

Khat appears to pose a relatively low risk for dependence, but withdrawal symptoms may be experienced if someone stops using khat after they have been using it regularly.

Symptoms may include:

- mild depression
- lower blood pressure
- tiredness.^{1,2}

Read more about withdrawal - adf.org.au/reducing-risk/withdrawal/

Khat and the law

It is illegal to import khat into Australia for personal use. For more information visit the Australian Government's Department of Health website - odc.gov.au/import-restrictions-kava-and-khat

References

1. Jerah A, Bidwai A, Alam M. A review of the history, cultivation, chemistry, pharmacology and adverse health effects of khat. International Journal of Applied and Natural Sciences. 2017;6(3):2319-4022.
2. Al-Juhaishi T, Al-Kindi S, Gehani A. Khat: A widely used drug of abuse in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula: Review of literature. Qatar Medical Journal. 2012;2:1-6.
3. Basker G. A review of the hazards of khat chewing. International Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. 2013;5:74-7.

Always call an ambulance on triple zero (000) if an overdose is suspected: tell the paramedic exactly what has been taken. Paramedics are there to help and will not involve the police unless there is a danger to themselves or others.

Other help, support services and resources

Links to further help and support • adf.org.au/help-support/

● Further information

DrugInfo • 1300 85 85 84

Free confidential information and advice about alcohol and other drugs (9am - 5pm, Mon-Fri)

Family Drug Help • 1300 660 068 • www.familydrughelp.com.au (Victorian-based)

Services are available to support those around you who may be affected by your drug use. As well as providing understanding, they can provide information about how best to help during treatment.

Family Drug Support • 1300 368 186 • www.fds.org.au (Australia-wide)



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