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Kratom: Dangerous and Readily Available

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Have you heard of Kratom? It has been used for centuries by people for its analgesic and stimulant effects. Its active components target the same receptor as morphine, which is why it is being used as a remedy to opioid addiction. In recent years, it also has been used as a natural supplement to treat depression and anxiety. But while there may be a benefit to some, Kratom should not be used casually. In large doses it is dangerous and highly addictive, and I have witnessed firsthand the devastation it can cause.

Kratom is often marketed as an herbal supplement or energy drink, and is readily available at any local gas station. The makers of these Kratom drinks and packets are marketing this drug in a way that appeals to teens. For example, the labels will say things like “Feel Good” or “Instant Energy” or other catchy slogans intended to disguise the product as a harmless source of energy.

While some people think Kratom may be a good treatment for those trying to get off of opioids, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has warned against using it in this way. “There is no reliable evidence to support the use of Kratom as a treatment for opioid use disorder,” the agency has said.

Reports also indicate that store owners and clerks are treating this product like a street drug. One way this is being done is taking products that



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are sold in quantities, breaking down the packaging, and selling small amounts in little baggies. Another way is giving customers Kratom “on credit” – letting them have the product up front with a promise of paying for it on their next pay day.

In the drug game this is called “fronting” someone drugs until they can pay. This is so dangerous and has to STOP. We need to do something about this now before Kratom becomes an epidemic in our community.

Though seven states – including our neighboring states of Indiana and Tennessee – and a few major cities have banned Kratom, the drug is not regulated in any way in Kentucky. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) continues to debate whether or not Kratom should be legal. In 2016, the DEA said Kratom offers no medical benefits and has the potential to become addictive and even cause death. Based on this, it proposed listing Kratom as a Schedule I drug, along with drugs such as heroin, LSD and ecstasy. Shortly thereafter it withdrew that decision and decided instead to accept public comments on how it should be regulated.

Whatever happens with state and federal drug enforcement laws, it is important for teens to understand the dangers of this drug. It is not the equivalent of an energy drink and you should do your homework before buying something with the active ingredients of Mitragnine and 7 Hydroxymitragnine. Look at the labels of what you buy and be smart about what you put in your body! Just because it is being sold does not mean you should buy it!

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