

The 'Natural' Supplement That Acts Like an Opioid: A Clinical Warning on Kratom

With 3,434 poison control reports in 2025 and no permanent regulation in sight, physicians warn kratom's most dangerous form could return to Florida shelves.

FL, UNITED STATES, May 6, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Kratom](#)-related poison control calls have surged 1,200% in a decade, and a Florida emergency ban on its most potent form is set to expire June 30, 2026, after lawmakers failed to make it permanent. A board-certified addiction medicine physician explains what's at stake.

Kratom (*Mitragyna speciosa*) is marketed as a safe, "natural" herbal supplement, sold openly at gas stations, smoke shops, and online retailers. But behind the wellness branding lies a pharmacologically active and dangerous substance whose primary alkaloids—mitragynine and especially 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH)—act as partial agonists, producing dose-dependent effects: stimulant-like alertness at low doses and opioid-like sedation, analgesia, and euphoria at higher doses.

Although some individuals begin use innocently, drawn by accessibility, Kratom's opioid-receptor activity carries substantial risks of tolerance, dependence, and substance use disorder. The FDA has repeatedly warned that Kratom is not approved for any medical use and can cause serious adverse effects, including liver toxicity, seizures, respiratory depression, and addiction.

Unregulated products often vary widely in potency and may contain contaminants or concentrated extracts that amplify dangers, increasing Risks in Florida and Nationally. Recent national data show a dramatic rise in Kratom-related harm. Poison control center reports for Kratom exposures increased approximately 1,200% from 2015 to 2025, reaching a record high of



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3,434 poison control reports in 2025, a 1,200% increase over the past decade, documented by the CDC's National Poison Data System.

This surge reflects both greater accessibility of Kratom products and the growing potency of concentrated formulations, particularly those high in 7-hydroxymitragynine. In areas where such products remain readily available in many retail settings, clinicians are seeing a corresponding uptick in patients presenting with dependence and withdrawal. Concentrated or semi-synthetic 7-OH products are especially concerning. These bind more potently to opioid receptors and have driven regulatory action.

In August 2025, Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier issued an emergency rule classifying isolated/concentrated 7-OH (above specific concentration thresholds) as a Schedule I controlled substance, leading to the removal of thousands of packages from shelves due to addiction and overdose risks. However, as of April 2026, proposed legislation to strengthen consumer protections and make 7-OH restrictions permanent did not pass before the legislative session ended.

The emergency rule is set to expire June 30, 2026, leaving high-potency products in a legal gray area, while traditional kratom leaf products remain generally legal for adults 21+ under the existing Kratom Consumer Protection Act framework.

"At [Banyan Treatment Centers](#), we are seeing more patients whose 'innocent' start with Kratom has progressed to daily dependence, tolerance escalation, and withdrawal that disrupts work, relationships, and health, often compounding existing mental health or prior SUD challenges."- Dr. Darrin Mangiacarne.

Key Risks and Pharmacology

Opioid-like dependence: Chronic use leads to physical dependence. 7-hydroxymitragynine is significantly more potent than mitragynine (roughly 10–40x at mu-opioid receptors in some studies). This helps explain why extracts can lead to faster dependence. Withdrawal (onset 12–48 hours, peaking 1–3 days) includes muscle aches, insomnia, anxiety, irritability, gastrointestinal distress, and intense cravings, sometimes comparable to mild-to-moderate opioid withdrawal. However, severity varies with dose and product potency. Toxicity and medical complications: Liver injury, seizures, cardiovascular effects, and rare fatalities (frequently in combination with other substances). Unregulated nature: Variable alkaloid content, potential adulterants, and the rise of potent extracts or gummies/shots make dosing unpredictable and riskier. Kratom does not treat opioid use disorder safely or effectively; it often trades one dependence for another and may delay evidence-based care.

When Individuals Should Seek Help:

Encourage patients, families, and communities to seek professional evaluation if they notice. Escalating doses due to tolerance or inability to cut back. Withdrawal symptoms when stopping or reducing use. Continued kratom use despite negative impacts on health, relationships, work, or mental well-being.

Cravings or using kratom to manage emotions, pain, or prior substance issues. Early intervention matters.

At Banyan, we provide a comprehensive assessment for kratom use disorder alongside any co-occurring mental health or substance use conditions.

Clinical Management and Treatment. There are no FDA-approved medications specifically for kratom dependence, but individualized care is effective.

Supervised withdrawal: Gradual tapering or supportive care (e.g., clonidine for autonomic symptoms, antiemetics, hydration) is often preferred over abrupt cessation. Medication options: Buprenorphine (or buprenorphine/naloxone) has shown success in case reports and clinical practice for managing cravings and withdrawal, particularly when opioid-receptor effects are prominent or comorbid opioid use disorder exists.

Behavioral and residential support: Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), contingency management, and structured programs address underlying drivers like chronic pain, anxiety, or trauma. Residential inpatient care at facilities like Banyan offers a safe, supportive environment for detox, stabilization, and skill-building when outpatient care is insufficient.

Holistic recovery: Screen for liver function, polysubstance use, and mental health; connect to long-term outpatient follow-up and community resources. Patients should understand that Kratom is not a harmless natural remedy; it is a chemical with real addiction potential. Evidence-based treatment works and offers a clear path to sustained recovery.

How Banyan Treatment Centers Treats Kratom Addiction:

Banyan Treatment Centers offers a structured, evidence-based approach to Kratom addiction that addresses every stage of recovery. Because Kratom dependence involves opioid-receptor pathways, Banyan's clinical team treats it with the same rigor applied to traditional opioid use disorders, beginning with a thorough medical and mental health evaluation to develop an individualized treatment plan.

Treatment typically begins with [medically supervised detox](#), where patients are safely guided through withdrawal under 24/7 medical oversight. Clinicians use supportive medications, such as clonidine for autonomic symptoms, antiemetics, and sleep aids, to manage discomfort and may introduce buprenorphine when clinically appropriate to reduce cravings and stabilize opioid-receptor activity. This supervised setting is especially critical for patients using high-potency

kratom extracts or 7-OH products, whose withdrawal can be more intense and unpredictable.

Following stabilization, patients transition into residential inpatient care, where the focus shifts to understanding and addressing the root causes of addiction. Banyan's programs incorporate cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), individual and group counseling, and trauma-informed modalities. Because many Kratom users initially turned to the substance to self-manage chronic pain, anxiety, depression, or prior opioid dependence, Banyan's dual-diagnosis approach treats co-occurring mental health conditions simultaneously, ensuring that underlying issues do not go unaddressed and fuel relapse.

Banyan also provides multiple levels of care to support patients at every phase of recovery. After completing residential treatment, patients may step down to partial hospitalization (PHP), intensive outpatient (IOP), or virtual intensive outpatient programming, maintaining therapeutic continuity while gradually reintegrating into daily life. With locations across multiple states, Banyan is equipped to provide accessible, comprehensive kratom addiction treatment tailored to each individual's needs.

Final Thoughts. In Florida's evolving regulatory landscape, marked by accessibility, recent 7-OH restrictions, and ongoing debates over consumer protections, clinicians and families must stay vigilant. If you or someone you know is struggling with Kratom, do not wait for a crisis. Reach out to Banyan Treatment Centers or call SAMHSA's National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP for confidential guidance.

Banyan remains committed to delivering medically grounded, compassionate care that cuts through hype and focuses on real recovery.

About Banyan Treatment Centers:

Banyan Treatment Centers is a leading provider of mental health and substance use disorder treatment, offering a full continuum of care, including detox, residential treatment, partial hospitalization, intensive outpatient, and Telehealth services across the United States.

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