

Report to the Boards of Health

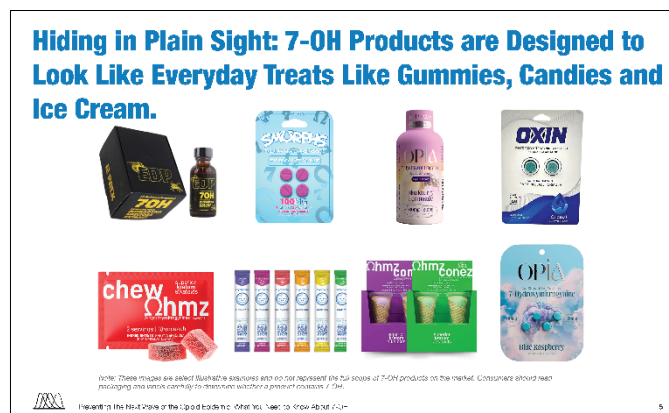
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Mid-Michigan District Health Department, Wednesday, April 22, 2026
Central Michigan District Health Department, Wednesday, April 22, 2026
District Health Department 10, Friday, April 24, 2026



Kratom

Kratom is a tropical plant from Southeast Asia and was traditionally used as tea. It is now sold in colorful, candy-like packaging like powders, capsules, tablets, gummies, energy shots, and vape cartridges that appeals to younger consumers. It is marketed for pain relief, mood enhancement, energy, and even as an opioid replacement or to help with opioid withdrawal. At low doses kratom acts as a stimulant. At higher doses it acts like an opioid. Kratom products can be found at gas stations, smoke shops, vape stores, party stores, and online retailers and can be bought with no age verification required in many states, including Michigan.



Many different chemicals are found in kratom. Two that are most active are mitragynine and 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH). Both bind opioid receptors, and mitragynine also acts on serotonin, dopamine, norepinephrine, and adrenergic receptors. Natural kratom only has trace amounts of 7-OH. However, manufacturers have learned to synthetically produce and concentrate 7-OH at much higher levels.

The most recent national data found kratom-related exposures reported to U.S. poison control centers increased by approximately 1,200% between 2015 and 2025, from 258 cases to 3,434 cases. There were 233 kratom-associated deaths documented over the 11-year study period. Up to a third of kratom users report some type of adverse side effect. The toxic effects from kratom range from mild to life-threatening and can include:

- Mild to moderate effects: nausea, vomiting, dizziness, drowsiness, constipation, itching, and tremors.
- Serious effects: seizures, high blood pressure, fast heart rate, cardiac arrhythmias, and respiratory depression.
- Severe/fatal outcomes: cardiac arrest, brain hemorrhage, liver damage, and death — particularly when combined with other drugs like opioids, benzodiazepines, antidepressants, or alcohol.
- Psychiatric effects: psychosis and severe anxiety have been reported with heavy, prolonged use.
- Neonatal effects: infants born to kratom-using mothers have been documented to experience neonatal abstinence syndrome, requiring medical treatment.

Around 25% of kratom users meet criteria for Kratom Use Disorder (KUD), with more than half of these having severe disorder. The symptoms identified were kratom tolerance, withdrawal, cravings, and consuming kratom in larger amounts or over longer periods than intended. Withdrawal symptoms are like opioid withdrawal and can include muscle aches, insomnia, irritability, nausea, sweating, and anxiety.

According to the FDA, kratom is not lawfully marketed in the U.S. as a drug product, a dietary supplement, or a food additive in conventional food and warns consumers not to use kratom. The agency has partnered with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection and with the Department of Justice to take many different actions to limit the sale of kratom products in the U.S. The FDA issued warning letters to companies illegally marketing products containing 7-OH. Last December, the U.S. Marshals seized approximately 73,000 units of 7-OH products, valued at roughly \$1 million, from three firms in Missouri.

In 2016, the DEA attempted to make mitragynine and 7-OH Schedule I controlled substances. Several advocacy groups protested this attempt, and 51 bipartisan members of Congress signed a letter opposing the scheduling. The DEA withdrew

Republicans voted against the bill. Arguments against this bill felt that regulation rather than outright ban would be more favorable, and also by not going to committee hearings, the legislation went forward without any testimony or dialogue.

If signed into law, HB 5537 would:

- Make it illegal for any person to grow, synthesize, sell, offer to sell, give, import, or distribute kratom or any synthetic variant of kratom, including 7-OH.
- Define kratom broadly as any product containing parts of the *Mitragyna speciosa* plant, including leaves, extracts, and derivatives.
- Create a misdemeanor offense for first-time violations, with penalties of up to 90 days in jail and/or a fine of up to \$5,000.
- Increase penalties for subsequent offenses (180 days in jail and/or a fine of up to \$10,000) and for sale to a minor under age 18 (up to one year in jail and/or a fine up to \$10,000, with repeat offenses carrying fines up to \$20,000).

The bill now awaits action in the Michigan Senate. If the Senate passes the bill and Governor Gretchen Whitmer signs it, Michigan will join Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Vermont, Wisconsin, Louisiana, and Ohio as states that have banned kratom. The bill's path through the Senate is uncertain; the Democratic majority may prefer a regulatory approach like the KCPA framework attempted in 2023.

A parallel bill exists that would instead establish a consumer protection and licensing framework through the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), requiring testing, labeling, age restrictions (21 and older), and licensed sellers — reflecting the ongoing debate between prohibition and regulated access.

Recommendations

1. Support some level of state and federal regulation of kratom and kratom derivatives.
2. Add kratom information to other substance use disorder and addiction awareness education.
3. Become aware of local retail establishments such as gas stations, party stores, smoke shops, and convenience stores to document the extent to which kratom and 7-OH products are available in the jurisdiction and whether any age restrictions are being voluntarily observed.

Resources

Protect You and Your Family



- There are provider education re: kratom available at <https://michigan-open.org/resources/education-training/> and <https://michigan-open.org/resource/kratom-educational-guide/>
- Public information: [Kratom 101 Flyer](#) and [Kratom on Campus Flyer](#)

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