

Kava

Piper methysticum G. Forst.

[Fam. Piperaceae]

OVERVIEW

Kava is traditionally served as a beverage in social or ceremonial rituals in the South Pacific islands, where it is revered as the primary cultural and medicinal botanical. While kava use has been popular in Europe for decades, it only recently became a top-selling herbal dietary supplement in the U.S., used by consumers mainly for dealing with feelings of anxiety.

Recently, kava has been implicated in some cases of hepatotoxicity in Europe and subsequently in the U.S. A detailed review of the chronology of the events related to kava and its alleged association with hepatotoxicity, plus updates on recent developments, is available on the American Botanical Council website (www.herbalgram.org).

USES

Anxiety disorder; sleep disorders; stress and restlessness; muscle relaxant.

DOSAGE

Do not use kava for more than one month without medical supervision.

FLUID EXTRACT (1:2): 3-6 mL daily, divided throughout the day.

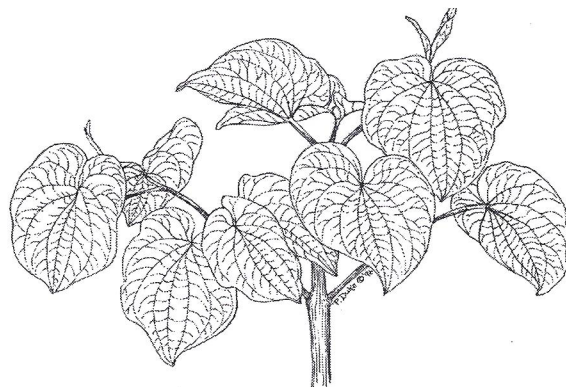
CAPSULES OR TABLETS: Powdered dry extract (not less than 30% kavalactones) or semisolid (paste) extract (not less than 50% kavalactones) in daily dosage equivalent to 60-120 mg kavalactones.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Consult with a healthcare practitioner prior to using kava in cases of depression. Not for use by persons under 18 years of age. Persons who have or have had liver disease or liver problems, persons taking any medication with known or suspected hepatotoxic effects, and persons who frequently use alcoholic beverages should consult a healthcare practitioner before using kava-containing products. Persons who use a kava-containing product and experience signs of illness associated with liver disease should discontinue use and consult their physician. Symptoms of serious liver disease include jaundice (yellowing of the skin or

Comments

When using a dietary supplement, purchase it from a reliable source. For best results, use the same brand of product throughout the period of use. As with all medications and dietary supplements, please inform your healthcare provider of all herbs and medications you are taking. Interactions may occur between medications and herbs or even among different herbs when taken at the same time. Treat your herbal supplement with care by taking it as directed, storing it as advised on the label, and keeping it out of the reach of children and pets. Consult your healthcare provider with any questions.



whites of the eyes) and brown urine. Non-specific symptoms of liver disease can include nausea, vomiting, light-colored stools, unusual tiredness, weakness, stomach or abdominal pain, and loss of appetite.

PREGNANCY AND LACTATION: Kava should not be used during pregnancy or while nursing.

ADVERSE EFFECTS

Adverse effects with recommended doses of kava are relatively rare. Large doses (400 mg kavalactones or more per day for longer than 3 months) may cause a scaly, yellowing skin condition (scaly ichthyosis), which resolves itself when use is discontinued. In 2 case reports liver inflammation occurred after ingestion of an herbal preparation containing kava extract and celandine (*Chelidonium majus*); however, the effects may have resulted from the celandine and/or the combination. Current research does not provide clear evidence of any scientific rationale that kava use is associated with liver damage; nevertheless, consumers and patients are advised to heed the above cautions.

DRUG INTERACTIONS

Taking kava along with alcohol, barbiturates, drugs affecting mental activity, or other substances acting on the central nervous system may increase inebriation or the effect of the drug. Kava may also increase the effect of other relaxation-promoting drugs.



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