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The New Jersey Poison Control Center — Serving New Jersey Since 1983

HEALTH ADVISORY

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Why "Natural" Doesn't Mean Safe as 7-OH Products Gain Popularity

Experts with the New Jersey Poison Control Center warn that products sold in convenience stores, smoke shops, and online may have opioid-like effects

As national attention increases around kratom and concentrated or synthetic 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH) products following recent high-profile death investigations, experts with the New Jersey Poison Control Center are urging consumers not to mistake widespread availability and "natural" marketing claims for evidence of safety.

Products containing 7-OH, a concentrated kratom-derived substance, are increasingly sold in smoke shops, vape stores, convenience stores and online. Often marketed for pain relief, relaxation, energy or mood enhancement, some products have been referred to in media reports as "gas station heroin" because of their opioid-like effects and widespread availability.

"What concerns us is that many consumers may not realize how much the market for these products has changed," said Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the New Jersey Poison Control Center at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. "We're no longer talking only about traditional kratom products. In some cases, synthetic 7-OH is being added to naturally occurring kratom products, increasing the potential for serious health consequences, including dependence, withdrawal, overdose and other medical emergencies. Consumers may not realize that these products can pose risks far greater than they expect."

While 7-OH occurs naturally in kratom, many products sold today contain concentrated levels that differ significantly from the trace amounts found in the plant. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has warned about the risks associated with these products.

In New Jersey, state officials recently acted to restrict three synthetic kratom-related compounds. However, products purchased before the restrictions took effect may still be available. As supplies diminish, some individuals who regularly use kratom or 7-OH products may experience withdrawal symptoms if use is reduced or stopped. Symptoms can be similar to opioid withdrawal and may include muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, tremors and difficulty sleeping.

Anyone experiencing withdrawal symptoms should contact the New Jersey Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 for expert medical help or seek medical care at the nearest healthcare facility.

“A product's availability is not a measure of its safety,” said Bruce Ruck, managing director of the New Jersey Poison Control Center. “These products may be sold in places people visit every day, but that familiarity can create a false sense of security. The risks don't change simply because a product is sold in a convenience store, smoke shop or online marketplace.”

Key Facts About 7-OH

- 7-OH and concentrated kratom extracts may have opioid-like effects.
- Labels may not clearly identify ingredients or concentrations, making it difficult to know exactly what you are taking.
- Do not assume a product is safe because it is marketed as natural, herbal or plant-based.
- Serious effects may include trouble breathing, passing out, seizures, dependence and withdrawal symptoms.
- Keep these products out of sight and reach of children and pets.
- If someone has trouble breathing, becomes difficult to wake, passes out or has a seizure, call 911 immediately.

The New Jersey Poison Control Center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Expert medical help is free, confidential and available to everyone. If you think someone may have been exposed to 7-OH, kratom or another potentially harmful substance, call the Poison Help line immediately at 1-800-222-1222 or chat online.

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Available for Media Interviews

Diane Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

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About New Jersey Poison Control Center/NJPIES

The New Jersey Poison Control Center, officially known as the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES), is the state’s poison control center and is part of Rutgers New Jersey Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine.

Poison specialists are doctors, nurses, and pharmacists who provide free, expert medical guidance for poisonings, medication errors, overdoses, drug interactions, carbon monoxide incidents, environmental hazards, household

chemicals, bites and stings, plant-related concerns, and other poisoning emergencies. Services are free, confidential, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and accessible in any language.

Need Poison Control? Call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222 or **Chat Here**

About Rutgers New Jersey Medical School
Established in 1954, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School (NJMS), part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, annually graduates around 170 skilled physicians and offers MD/PhD, MD/MPH, and MD/MBA programs. Committed to excellence in education, research, clinical care, and community engagement, NJMS comprises 20 dynamic academic departments and collaborates with healthcare partners, including University Hospital. With renowned faculty, a student-run clinic, and many cutting-edge centers and institutes, NJMS invites you to explore its rich history and academic programs at https://njms.rutgers.edu/.

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