Kava

url: https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/kava  
  
  
Kava  
Common Names: kava, kava kava, ava pepper, ava root, kawa  
  
Latin Names: Piper methysticum  
  
Background  
Kava is native to the islands of the western Pacific and is a member of the pepper family.  
Pacific islanders have used kava for thousands of years as a medicine and for ritual purposes.  
Today, kava is promoted as a dietary supplement for anxiety, insomnia, and other conditions.  
How Much Do We Know?  
There has been a fair amount of research in people on the use of kava for anxiety, but few studies have been done on other conditions.  
What Have We Learned?  
Kava supplements may have a small effect on reducing anxiety, but they have been linked to a risk of severe liver injury.  
There isn t enough evidence to show whether kava is helpful for any other conditions.  
What Do We Know About Safety?  
The use of kava has been linked to liver injury that is sometimes serious or even fatal. The exact cause and frequency of the liver damage are unclear.  
Kava can cause digestive upset, headache, dizziness, and other side effects. The use of kava may affect the ability to drive or operate machinery. Long-term use of high doses of kava may cause kava dermopathy, a condition that involves dry, scaly, flaky skin with a yellow discoloration.  
Kava may have special risks if taken during pregnancy or while breastfeeding because of the presence of harmful pyrone constituents.  
Keep in Mind  
Take charge of your health talk with your health care providers about any complementary health approaches you use. Together, you can make shared, well-informed decisions.  
For More Information  
Using Dietary Supplements Wisely  
Know the Science: How Medications and Supplements Can Interact  
Know the Science: How To Make Sense of a Scientific Journal Article  
NCCIH Clearinghouse  
The NCCIH Clearinghouse provides information on NCCIH and complementary and integrative health approaches, including publications and searches of Federal databases of scientific and medical literature. The Clearinghouse does not provide medical advice, treatment recommendations, or referrals to practitioners.  
  
Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-888-644-6226  
  
Telecommunications relay service (TRS): 7-1-1  
  
Website: https://www.nccih.nih.gov  
  
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Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS), National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
ODS seeks to strengthen knowledge and understanding of dietary supplements by evaluating scientific information, supporting research, sharing research results, and educating the public. Its resources include publications (such as Dietary Supplements: What You Need To Know) and fact sheets on a variety of specific supplement ingredients and products (such as vitamin D and multivitamin/mineral supplements).  
  
Website: https://ods.od.nih.gov  
  
Email: ods@nih.gov(link sends email)  
  
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