

# Abstract

**Introduction:** Kratom is a psychoactive substance made from the tropical tree *Mitragyna speciosa*, which is native to Southeast Asia. Today, it is already widespread throughout the world, mainly due to its paradoxically biphasic properties –stimulant and analgesic. In the Czech Republic, kratom is not regulated in any way, so it is easily available for all ages. This makes it attractive to a population of young people, including high school students.

**Objectives:** The main objective was to find out the prevalence of kratom use among the students of the selected high school. Another objective was to find out the most common reasons for kratom use. The last objective was to examine the consequences associated with kratom use in the research population.

**Methods:** Quantitative research was used to obtain the data. The research was conducted using an anonymous online questionnaire survey on a paid version of the Survio.com platform. For the research, the management of a selected upper secondary school in the Zlín region was contacted and agreed to conduct the research among students over 15 years of age (first, second, third and fourth years of a four-year secondary school and students of the quint, sexta, septima and octave of an eight-year secondary school). The Survio.com platform was used to collect the data, which was then converted into MS Excel. The collected data were analyzed in the statistical programs JASP and RStudio using descriptive statistics methods.

**Results:** 30.2 % of the students of the selected upper secondary school have used kratom at least once in their lives. The largest proportion of students, 14.3 %, had tried kratom only once. In the last 30 days, 13 % of the respondents had used kratom. In the last 7 days, 11 % of the respondents have used kratom. The most common type of kratom used by the respondents during their lifetime was the green type (98.7 %) and it is also the most commonly (86.4 %) used type of kratom among the selected students. The greatest motivation for use was to calm down (61.8 %), to get better mood (48.5 %), to get more performance (42.6 %) and to increase energy (39.7 %). The selected students used most frequently (52.8 %) the medium dose, representing 2-4 grams in a single use dose. The second most commonly (25 %) taken dose, was a low dose, representing 1-2 grams of kratom. The most frequent use by students (63.9 %) was less than 5 grams per day. Exactly 26.2 % of the students were taking a daily dose of 5-10 grams. As already mentioned, the research showed that almost one third of the students of the selected high school had experience of kratom use. Most of them had used kratom only once 35 (14.3 %) or exceptionally 16 (6.6 %). Almost half of the students (43 %) believe that kratom is an illegal substance. It was also found that more than 90 % (exactly 90.7 %) of students think kratom is addictive. Respondents perceived nausea, vomiting, decreased appetite and cognitive impairment as the main negative effects associated with kratom use. Feelings of calmness, improved mood, more energy and increased performance were the most commonly perceived positive effects.

**Conclusions:** This study is one of the first studies in the country to focus on kratom use among high school students. The contribution of the study is new knowledge about how often and for what reasons high school students use kratom and what effects they most often experience when using it. In conclusion, further research on the prevalence of kratom use among younger elementary school students would be useful.

**Keywords:** kratom, prevalence, students, grammar school, patterns of use.

