

[Khat] 4-Methylmethcathinone

Slang/Street names for KHAT:

ABYSSINIAN TEA, AFRICAN SALAD, OAT, KAT, MEOW MEOW, CHAT, CATHA, SUNSHINE, PLANT FERTILIZER, HERBAL ECSTASY, LEGAL ECSTASY

Khat A.K.A. 'Meow Meow' (pronounced 'cot') (1)

is technically a legal drug because the Khat plant (Catha Edulis Forsk— a shrub which grows to tree size, native to East Africa and Southern Arabia) itself is not scheduled under the controlled substances act in the USA. However one of its chemicals 'cathinone' is a Schedule I drug. The US government treats Khat as equivalent to Cathinone and therefore the substance is considered illegal. (2)

Khat leaves and stems are chewed in many East African nations and has been part of their culture for many years. Because of its euphoric affects Khat chewing plays an important role in celebrations, meetings, marriages and other community events. (3)

Khat has two main psychoactive chemicals Cathine and Cathinone very similar in structure to amphetamines and therefore is a stimulant just not as potent.(4) Cathinone is several times stronger than Cathine and is therefore designated a schedule I drug (most restricted and harmful type), whilst Cathine is a schedule III type drug (less potential for abuse and has acceptable use in certain areas of medicine) in the USA (5) Chewing Khat affects the dopamine neurotransmitters causing high levels of dopamine to flood the synapse giving off its typical euphoric effect of all stimulant type drugs. Along with the euphoria comes increased alertness and arousal, increased blood pressure and elevated heart rate which can typically last from anywhere between 90 minutes

to three hours, The after effects are also similar to typical stimulants in that the user tends to experience depression, loss of appetite and sleep disturbance. (6) The stimulant Cathinone is broken down by stomach enzymes into cathine and norephedrine, part of a group of chemicals called phenyl-propanolamines (PPAs), which adrenaline and amphetamine also belong to

Khat (Miraa)

MERU, a town on the eastern edge of Mount Kenya, is the source of miraa , one of the most potent forms of qat (Khat). Miraa grows alongside coffee and tea plants on shambas, small farms in the Nyambeni Hills. New reddish- green twigs are picked off the trees daily, gathered into bunches of 100 shoots called "kilos," wrapped in banana leaves to keep them moist and transported to wholesalers at collection points along the main road.





HOW IT MESSES YOU UP... SHORT TERM :

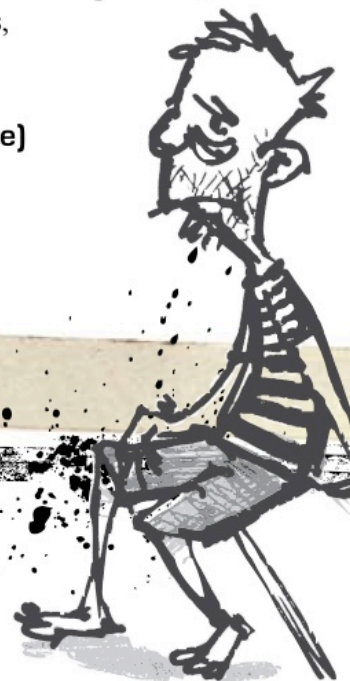
Because Khat is a relatively unknown drug in the western world it's effects have not been rigorously researched.

The Cathinone in Khat however has been classified as a Schedule 1 substance in the USA. It has similar effects to that of Amphetamine and Ecstasy. Most of the evidence of the effects of the leaf on users is anecdotal from the African Continent.

What little research does exist however shows some alarming effects that should send strong signals to users that this leaf is not a mild, harmless drug. Just because it is chewed by millions of people doesn't automatically mean it's relatively harmless. Many thought the same of Tobacco, in fact several decades ago ads were run by Tobacco companies portraying health practitioners promoting tobacco as beneficial to health!

Constipation is commonly associated with khat use. Other adverse effects include tachycardia (increased heart rate), palpitations, increased blood pressure, anorexia, stomatitis, esophagitis, and gastritis.

Anaphro-disia (loss of sex drive) is reported frequently by men using khat. (10)



HOW IT MESSES YOU UP... LONG TERM :

Khat may cause oral and stomach cancer, cerebral haemorrhage, MI, duodenal ulcers, hypertension, testicular degeneration, low birth-weight in infants, and a variety of other severe effects including addiction, tooth decay, periodontal disease and upper gastrointestinal tumours. (11)

It also may worsen already existing mental illness symptoms such as psychosis and depression. (12) Some sources actually say that it causes a user to become emotionally unstable, irritable, hyperactive and easily angered - sometimes to the point of violence. (13)

Khat use increases stroke and death risk in acute coronary syndrome. (14)

There is no conclusive evidence that khat causes tolerance, physical or psychological dependency, addiction or withdrawal however there have been some reports of nightmares and trembling several days after chewing has ceased. (15)



UNUSUAL FACTS :

- PPAs have a dramatic effect on male fertility. Testing on mouse and human sperm have shown that PPAs help sperm through the final stages of maturity until it's ready to fertilize. PPA's also keep the sperm in this peak 'primed' condition until the opportune time for it to penetrate the egg. (8)
- Yemeni lore has it that the properties of the small tree, which grows best at elevations of 1,500 to 1,800 meters, were discovered by a herder who noticed its effect on his goats and began chewing it himself to stay awake and because it gave him added strength. In Ethiopian legend, two praying saints who appealed to God to help them stay awake were shown the plant by an angel. (9)








OTHER DATA THAT'S RELEVANT :

- Matthew Bryden, a Canadian who has worked for aid organizations in Somalia for three years, says many Khat users find they must counter the stimulant in order to sleep or work properly. They turn to alcohol or sedatives to relax and reduce anxiety. "What's happening in Mogadishu is people are under the influence of Khat and valium or liquor," Mr. Bryden says. "You become a mess. Either you crack completely or you lose reality. [16]
- Apart from the Meru tribe, few Kenyans consume miraa. But so popular is it as an export that in some places it has overtaken coffee as a cash crop.



HOW IT'S INTRODUCED INTO THE BODY :

[The skull indicates the most used methods of ingestion of the drug described in this Fact Sheet]

- Chewed 
- Injected (fluid) 
- Injected/Intravenously
- Injected/Intramuscularly
- Injected/ subcutaneously
- Sniffed/Snorted (powder)
- Inhaled (vapour)
- Smoked
- Swallowed
- Eaten 
- Absorbed through skin





FIRST AID :

There are no known cases of Khat overdoses, however if it does occur... "check to see if they are breathing, put them on their side and gently tilt their head back to open their wind-pipe.

Call an ambulance immediately (dial 000) and follow the operator's instructions.

The patient should be made as comfortable as possible, preferably by a qualified medical or first aid person, until paramedics arrive.



BEST AID :

never touch it



WHERE TO GET HELP : medical and other

- DirectLine Alcohol and Drug Counselling and Referral Line 1800 888 236
- Live Free Victoria 03 58523777



REFERENCES:

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Dalgarno
INSTITUTE

(Coalition of Alcohol and Drug Educators)

Phone: 1300 975 002

Email: admin@dalgarnoinstitute.org.au

www.nobrainier.org.au