



DIETARY SUPPLEMENT FACT SHEET

<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhpw/Wellness.aspx>

Kava (*Piper methysticum*)

Also known as: Kava Kava, Kava pepper, Ava, Ava pepper, Awa, Kava root, Kawa, Kawa-Kawa, Kew, Rauschpfeffer, Sakau, Tonga, Wurzelstock, and Yangona

Historical Perspective: A non-alcoholic drink made from the root of kava played an important role in a variety of ceremonies in the Pacific Islands. Pacific Islanders valued kava for its mellowing effects, and to encourage socializing. It was also noted for initiating a state of contentment, a greater sense of well-being, treatment of asthma, and enhanced mental acuity, memory, and sensory perception. Kava has also been used traditionally to treat pain.

Common Uses: Relief of nervous anxiety, stress, restlessness, insomnia, and menopausal symptoms.

Form(s) Used: Capsule, pill, tincture, or tea.

Potential Side Effects: Scaly yellowing of the skin; yellowing of nails, eyes and hair; eye irritation; tiredness and tendency to sleep; impairment of motor reflexes, equilibrium, and judgment; rash; gastrointestinal problems; pupil dilation; tiredness in the morning, and liver disease, including hepatitis, cirrhosis, and liver failure.

Food-Drug-Supplement Interactions: Alcohol

Contraindication to Use: Antianxiety medications. Not recommended for those with liver disease or depression. Also not recommended for anyone taking drug products that can affect the liver, barbiturates, or psychopharmacological substances longer than three months. It is not recommended during pregnancy and lactation, or for children.

Research Data on Safety and Efficacy:

- 1) The research is inconclusive that Kava reduces anxiety.
- 2) On February 22, 1998, the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) announced 16 dietary supplements as risky. Kava was listed with a warning that it "can potentiate the effects of alcohol and certain psychological drugs."
- 3) On March 25, 2002, the FDA issued a consumer advisory stating the "potential risk of severe liver injury associated with the use of kava-containing dietary supplements."

Bottom-Line: Not recommended due to the potential risk of severe liver injury.

References:

1. The people's pharmacy guide to home and herbal remedies. J. Graedon, and T. Graedon, Graedon Enterprises, Inc; 1999.
2. Herbal medicinals: A clinician's guide. L. Miller and M. Wallace, Hawthorne Press, New York; 1998.
3. The Health Professionals' Guide to Popular Dietary Supplements, 2nd Edition. Allison Sarubin Fragakis, MS, RD, The American Dietetic Associations, 2003.