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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NIH Approval of Groundbreaking Kratom Research Sends Powerful Message to Policymakers: Natural Kratom Leaf Is Part of the Solution, Not the Problem**

*Learn more about the science and policy implications at a special Congressional Briefing on June 3.*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — The American Kratom Association (AKA) today welcomed the [announcement](#) by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that federal researchers will move forward with groundbreaking research into compounds derived from natural kratom leaf as a potential tool in addressing opioid use disorder.

This announcement represents a major milestone in the scientific evaluation of kratom and should serve as a wake-up call for policymakers across the country who continue to rely on outdated narratives and misinformation about natural kratom products.

Perhaps most importantly, this study could not have been approved without a rigorous review of the available scientific evidence regarding human safety. Before any clinical study involving human participants can proceed, researchers must satisfy strict ethical and scientific standards designed to protect study subjects from unreasonable risks. Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and federal research oversight authorities do not authorize human studies unless they are convinced that the risks to participants have been appropriately evaluated and minimized. The approval of this research reflects the growing body of scientific evidence demonstrating that natural kratom leaf can be studied in humans without presenting unreasonable safety concerns under controlled research conditions.

“For years, opponents of kratom have attempted to portray natural kratom leaf as a public health threat,” said Mac Haddow, Senior Fellow on Public Policy for the American Kratom Association. “The decision by NIH to move forward with this research sends exactly the opposite message. Federal scientists believe the available evidence justifies studying kratom’s potential role in helping address one of the most devastating public health crises in America, the opioid overdose epidemic.”

The NIH announcement is significant for another reason. Federal researchers are not merely studying kratom’s safety. They are studying whether compounds derived from natural kratom leaf may provide meaningful benefits for individuals suffering from opioid use disorder.

That distinction matters.

While critics continue to focus on unsupported allegations and anecdotal claims, NIH researchers are focused on answering a far more important question: Can kratom help save lives?

The AKA believes this research reflects what many consumers, clinicians, and researchers have observed for years: that natural kratom leaf may serve as a valuable harm-reduction tool for individuals seeking alternatives to dangerous opioids.

The AKA also urged state legislators, governors, county commissioners, city councils, and public health officials to carefully consider the implications of the NIH decision.

“State policymakers should take confidence from the fact that the nation’s premier biomedical research agency has determined that kratom deserves serious scientific investigation,” Haddow said. “This is not the action of an agency that views natural kratom leaf as an imminent threat to public health. It is the action of an agency seeking to determine whether kratom can be part of the solution to the opioid crisis.”

The AKA cautioned policymakers against confusing natural kratom leaf products with the rapidly expanding market for chemically manipulated 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH) products.

These products are fundamentally different from traditional kratom products. Many are manufactured through chemical conversion processes that dramatically increase concentrations of 7-hydroxymitragynine and create products with pharmacological profiles far different from those found in natural kratom leaf.

Federal officials have increasingly expressed concerns about these chemically manipulated products. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Food and Drug Administration have specifically identified synthetic and chemically manipulated 7-OH products as posing significant public health concerns and have recommended federal scheduling actions against these substances.

Unfortunately, many of these products continue to be marketed using the word “kratom,” creating confusion among consumers and policymakers alike.

“Natural kratom leaf is not the problem,” Haddow said. “The real threat comes from chemically manipulated opioid products that are being falsely marketed as kratom.” Policymakers should focus their enforcement efforts on these dangerous products rather than depriving responsible adult consumers of access to properly manufactured natural kratom leaf products.”

The AKA reiterated its support for strong consumer protection standards, including age restrictions, product testing, labeling requirements, contaminant controls, and limits on 7-OH levels in products marketed as kratom.

The NIH announcement should encourage policymakers to follow the science, not the fear.

As the nation's leading scientists continue to investigate kratom's potential role in reducing opioid-related harm, the evidence increasingly points toward a simple conclusion: natural kratom leaf deserves fair, objective, science-based regulation that cannot and should not be confused with highly addictive and dangerous 7-OH opioids.

### **Special Congressional Briefing on Kratom**

The American Kratom Association invites members of Congress, congressional staff, and members of the media to attend a special congressional briefing on kratom. The briefing will examine the latest science, the critical distinction between natural kratom leaf and chemically manipulated 7-OH products, and the policy path forward in light of the NIH's decision to advance clinical research.

**Date & Time:** Tomorrow, Wednesday, June 3, 2026, 11:00 a.m. ET

**Location:** United States Capitol Building, Room HVC 201, Washington, D.C.

**Hosted by:** Dr. Rahul Gupta, former Director of National Drug Control Policy

Legislators, staffers, and credentialed media can find event details and RSVP at [protectkratom.org/congress](https://protectkratom.org/congress).

### **About the American Kratom Association**

The American Kratom Association is the nation's leading consumer advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the rights of millions of Americans who rely on safe and properly regulated kratom products. The AKA supports science-based regulation, consumer protection standards, and continued research into the safety and potential benefits of natural kratom leaf.

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