

Khat information:

Khat (*Catha edulis*) is a herbal substance containing many different compounds. Its main effects are due to two compounds with stimulant properties similar to, but less powerful than, amphetamines. Stimulants speed up your mind and body. It comes from a leafy green plant of the same name. Used mostly in Africa, Khat is becoming more common in Europe - particularly in some immigrant communities.

Slang: Street names for drugs can vary around the country. Khat, quat, qat, qaadka, chat.

The effects

- Severe depression
- Khat is a stimulant and chewing it can make people more alert and talkative and can produce feelings of elation.
- It can also suppress the appetite.
- Although it's a stimulant, many users report a feeling of calm if it's chewed over a few hours. Some describe it as being 'blissed out'.

Chances of getting hooked

Khat can make a user psychologically dependent (with a desire to keep using in spite of potential harm). When they stop using they may feel lethargic or mildly depressed.

The law

Khat is not an illegal drug in the UK. It can be used or traded without penalty. Khat is an illegal substance in many other countries like the US. Taking khat into the US could attract a heavy prison sentence.

Appearance and use

Khat is a leaf which is chewed over a number of hours.

Cost

Prices can vary from region to region. The prices given here are an average of street prices reported from 20 different parts of England. A 'hit' which is a small bunch of leaves costs around £4.

Purity

Because Khat comes in recognisable leaf form, it can't be cut with anything.

The risks

If you use it a lot, you may develop insomnia, high blood pressure and heart problems and sexual problems like impotence. There's also a longer-term risk of development of mouth cancers.

- It can give you feelings of anxiety and aggression.
- It can make pre-existing mental health problems worse and can cause paranoid and psychotic reactions (which may be associated with irritability, anxiety and losing touch with reality).