

# Khat

## WHAT IS KHAT?

Khat is a flowering evergreen shrub that is abused for its stimulant-like effect. Khat has two active ingredients, cathine and cathinone.

## WHAT IS ITS ORIGIN?

Khat is native to East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, where the use of it is an established cultural tradition for many social situations

## What are common street names?

Common street names for Khat include:

→ Abyssinian Tea, African Salad, Catha, Chat, Kat, and Oat

## What does it look like?

Khat is a flowering evergreen shrub. Khat that is sold and abused is usually just the leaves, twigs, and shoots of the Khat shrub.

## How is it abused?

Khat is typically chewed like tobacco, then retained in the cheek and chewed intermittently to release the active drug, which produces a stimulant-like effect. Dried Khat leaves can be made into tea or a chewable paste, and Khat can also be smoked and even sprinkled on food.

## What is its effect on the mind?

Khat can induce manic behavior with:

→ Grandiose delusions, paranoia, nightmares, hallucinations, and hyperactivity

Chronic Khat abuse can result in violence and suicidal depression.

## What is its effect on the body?

Khat causes an immediate increase in blood pressure and heart rate. Khat can also cause a brown staining of the teeth, insomnia, and gastric disorders. Chronic abuse of Khat can cause physical exhaustion.



*Khat plant*

## What are its overdose effects?

The dose needed to constitute an overdose is not known, however it has historically been associated with those who have been long-term chewers of the leaves. Symptoms of toxicity include:

→ Delusions, loss of appetite, difficulty with breathing, and increases in both blood pressure and heart rate

Additionally, there are reports of liver damage (chemical hepatitis) and of cardiac complications, specifically myocardial infarctions. This mostly occurs among long-term chewers of khat or those who have chewed too large a dose.

## Which drugs cause similar effects?

Khat's effects are similar to other stimulants, such as cocaine and methamphetamine.

## What is its legal status in the United States?

The chemicals found in khat are controlled under the Controlled Substances Act. Cathine is a Schedule IV stimulant, and cathinone is a Schedule I stimulant under the Controlled Substances Act, meaning that it has a high potential for abuse, no currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States, and a lack of accepted safety for use under medical supervision.