



Kava Kava

(Concentrate)

Stock #405-9 (60 capsules)

Statistics from the National Foundation for Brain Research in Washington D.C. show roughly 50 million American adults suffer from anxiety and associated symptoms of nervousness, indigestion, weakened immunity, hampered concentration, chronic fatigue, sleeplessness, and a general lack of well-being. Unfortunately, many individuals experience a progression of anxiety which leads to panic attacks. Such episodes can trigger physiological symptoms such as chest pains, choking or feelings of being smothered, dizziness, fear of dying or losing control of one's mind, irregular heartbeat, sweating, and trembling. The National Institute of Health's Office of Medical Applications Research in Bethesda, Maryland projects that as many as 3 million Americans may experience a panic disorder at some point, with occurrences being twice as frequent in women as men.^{1,2}

Commonly prescribed drugs for the treatment of anxiety and panic disorders include benzodiazepines (tranquilizers) such as Halcion, Serax, Valium and Xanax. Unfortunately, there are critical side effects associated with use of these drugs, including appetite loss, headaches, neuromuscular difficulties, psychosis, seizures, and vision disorders. Furthermore, withdrawal symptoms documented upon completion of such drug therapy include agitation, anxiety, appetite loss, blurred vision, diarrhea, dizziness, headaches, insomnia, neuromuscular irritability, psychosis, ringing in the ears, seizures, and trembling.¹

Another increasingly common problem is sleeplessness or insomnia. An estimated 60% of adults in the U.S. alone combat varying degrees of periodic insomnia. Typical indicators of insomnia include the inability to fall sleep, waking during the night and being unable to get back to sleep, restless sleep, or never fully achieving a restful deep sleep. In the U.S., an estimated 25 million prescriptions are written every year for drugs such as Valium for the treatment of short-term insomnia.^{1,2}

Fortunately, there is a natural alternative available to combat such problems. Kava Kava, a staple of Polynesian traditional medicine, has been shown in numerous scientific studies to effectively reduce both general and menopausal anxiety and to improve restlessness and insomnia. Kava is used throughout Germany for relieving nervous anxiety, stress, and restlessness, and is commonly recommended as an alternative to drugs such as Valium. In fact, the German Commission E Monographs list kava as a "safe remedy for anxiety".^{2,3,4}

Kava Kava contains active constituents known as kava lactones or pyrones, which are responsible for the herb's anti-anxiety and sleep-enhancing properties. Unlike herbs such as valerian which are believed to induce relaxation by affecting GABA receptors in the brain, kava lactones appear to act on the limbic system of the brain—primarily associated with feelings, emotions, instincts, and drives—which may explain the herb's broad range of action. Kava lactones have also been shown in laboratory studies to be powerful skeletal muscle relaxants. Researchers believe kava lactones function by directly relaxing skeletal muscles, rather than inhibiting the transmission of nerve signals, as with pharmaceutical muscle relaxants.^{2,3,5}

Additional research shows that kava lactones can change brain activity in humans without causing sedation. Various German studies confirm the ability to relax the mind while simultaneously increasing mental awareness. Furthermore, one particular kava lactone—kavain—has been shown to aid those attempting to quite drinking.^{2,5}

In 1996, a randomized placebo-controlled, double-blind study was conducted involving two groups of 29 people. During the 4-week study, participants received either a placebo or 100mg of dry kava extract (standardized to contain 70mg of kava lactones) three times daily. After only one week, those taking the kava extract exhibited significantly reduced levels of anxiety in contrast to the placebo group. Final study results confirmed that the kava extract was clinically effective in lowering anxiety, excitedness and tension of non-mental origins, with no adverse effects.^{4,5}

An 8-week placebo-controlled study involving 40 women going through menopause showed that those receiving 100mg of kava extract three times daily (standardized to contain 70% kava lactones) demonstrated a significant decrease in anxiety, depression and menopausal symptoms compared to the placebo group. After only one week of kava supplementation, anxiety levels among the women decreased 50%. After 4 weeks, anxiety levels had decreased to nearly zero, remaining at zero throughout the rest of the study. Symptoms of depression and restlessness were reduced a total of 58% in the kava group. Furthermore, reports of severe menopausal symptoms were completely eliminated after 4 weeks of kava therapy.^{1,2}

German researchers conducted a long-term, placebo-controlled trial to determine the effectiveness of a kava extract with 101 individuals suffering from various forms of anxiety and tension, including agoraphobia (fear of public places),

social phobia, generalized anxiety disorder, and adjustment disorder with anxiety. Participants received either a placebo or kava capsule (containing 70mg of kava lactones) three times daily. Study results showed kava provided both short- and long-term benefits, improving with time. After 24 weeks, 75% of participants receiving kava experienced improvement compared to only 51% taking a placebo. Furthermore, researchers concluded that for individuals with mild to moderate anxiety, kava would be an effective alternative to tricyclic antidepressants and benzodiazepines with none of the tolerance problems associated with such drugs. However, kava may not prove as effective as stronger medications, such as Valium and Xanax, for treating severe anxiety disorders.^{5,6}

Furthermore, an in-depth study conducted on the effects of kava while driving or operating heavy machinery demonstrated that, when taken according to recommended dosages, kava use imparted no noticeable impairment of coordination, judgment, or visual perception.¹

The majority of studies on the use of kava for anxiety reflect an effective daily dosage to range from 70-200mg of kava lactones. For promoting restful sleep, the recommended dosage is 150-200mg of kava lactones to be taken 30-60 minutes before going to bed. Standardized European kava supplements generally supply 70% kava lactones.^{1,5}

The only credible documentation of side effects from recommended kava use to date were cited in *The Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry*. Reportedly, there have been 4 cases where individuals taking various kava preparations have developed involuntary movements (extrapyramidal side effects), indicating the possibility of kava being a dopamine antagonist.¹

Long-term use of high dosages of kava can lead to a reversible dry, scaly skin condition known as kava dermopathy.²

Pregnant or nursing women, as well as individuals with depression should avoid taking kava kava. This supplement should also not be taken in conjunction with alcohol or other medications. Furthermore, due to its documented anesthetic effects, kava use should be avoided if receiving anesthesia prior to surgery.^{1,2,5}

Each preservative-free capsule of NSP's Kava Kava contains 200mg of concentrated Kava Kava root extract, standardized to 30% total kava lactones.

References:

- 1 Kilham, Chris. "Kava For Anxiety and Insomnia." *Nutrition Science News*; May 1997.
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- 3 Foster, S. "Combating Stress: Herbs Can Help." *The Herb Companion*; Vol. 10, No. 2.
- 4 Singh, Y.N. and Blumenthal, M. "Kava: An Overview." *Herbalgram*, 1997, Vol. 39.
- 5 Singh, Yadhu N. and Blumenthal, Mark. "Kava culture, then and now." *Herbs For Health*; Vol. 2, No. 6.
- 6 Sahelian M.D., Ray. "Kava: Herbal alternative to benzodiazepines." *American Journal of Natural Medicine*; 1997, Vol. 4, No. 8.