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KHAT

AKA: Catha Edulis

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GetSmart About Drugs - A DEA Resource for Parents

Street Names: Khat has over 40 street names to include Abyssinian Tea, African Salad, Bushman's Tea, Chat, Gat, Kat, Miraa, Oat, Qat, Somali Tea, Tohai, Tschat

Description: Catha Edulis is a shrub (6-12 feet in height) which is grown in southern Arabia and Eastern Africa, and primarily in the countries of Somalia, Yemen, Kenya and Ethiopia. Also known as khat, qat, and quat (pronounced cot). The leaves of this plant contain the alkaloids cathine and cathinone, and are chewed for the stimulant effects.

How is Khat abused? Khat is ingested by chewing the leaves-as is done with loose tobacco. Dried Khat leaves can be brewed in tea or added to food.

What are the licit uses of khat? There is no legitimate use for khat in the United States.

CATHINE: An alkaloid which is a Schedule IV drug under the CSA.

CATHINONE: An alkaloid which is a Schedule I drug under the CSA.

What is an alkaloid? Any of various physiologically active, nitrogen-containing organic bases obtained from plants such as nicotine, quinine, atropine, cocaine, and morphine.

Within 48 hours of harvest Khat's chemical composition breaks down and at that point Khat contains only Cathine, the schedule IV substance.

What effects does Khat have on a user? After ingestion the user experiences immediate increase in blood pressure and heart rate. It is a stimulant which effects begin to subside after about 90 minutes to 3 hours, but can last 24 hours.

Who uses Khat? Khat is accepted within the Somali, Kenyan, Ethiopian, and Yemeni cultures in the U.S. and is used by members of this immigrant community. Typically, only the males from these cultures use the drug.

What are the risks? Individuals who abuse khat typically experience a state of mild depression following periods of prolonged use. Taken in excess khat causes extreme thirst, hyperactivity, insomnia, and loss of appetite. Khat can reduce the user's motivation and can cause manic behavior with grandiose delusions, paranoia, and hallucinations. Khat can cause damage to the nervous, respiratory, circulatory, and digestive systems.

How much is available in the United States? The availability of khat in the United States has been increasing since 1995. According to the Federal-wide Drug Seizure System (FDSS), law enforcement seizures of khat increased from 14 metric tons in 1995 to over 37 metric tons in 2001. During the first six months of 2002, nearly 30 metric tons of khat was seized. El Paso Intelligence Center reported that law enforcement seized 32, 39, 37, 54, 47, and 32 metric tons of khat in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, and through September 2005, respectively.

How much does it cost to manufacture? Khat is purchased from farmers in the horn of Africa region for about \$1 per kilogram. Warlords operating in this area use their planes to ship the khat to countries in Europe, where khat is still legal. The khat is sold to middlemen for \$200/kg, a profit of \$199 per kilogram. The drugs are then shipped to the United States and elsewhere.

How much does Khat sell for in the United States? Khat generally sells for \$300-\$600 per kilogram or \$30 to \$60 per bundle (which is 40 leafed twigs measuring 12-15 inches in length).

How is khat shipped to United States? Khat is either shipped using couriers who can put between 20 and 140 kilograms in their suitcases or sent via express mail in boxes containing 9-25 kilograms of khat.

Where do the profits go? Evidence suggests the money made from the sale of khat is moving back to Europe and the Middle East.