

Item #7(4)

**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL
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**SUBMITTED AT THE REQUEST OF
COMMISSIONER JACOBS**

New herbal stimulant creates buzz, worry about addiction

CLEVELAND — This drug is potentially addictive, but you can walk right into a store in a city or suburb and buy it over the counter.

Parents probably haven't heard of it yet — and so far, it's not illegal to sell it if you are calling it a tea, as head shops are. But some also are pitching it as a drug, which is illegal. The state of Indiana has banned its use.

Either way, the drug called kratom — pronounced *kray-tum* — is on law enforcement's radar.

Online, kratom has created a buzz with young men recording YouTube testimonials while they are high on it.

"Kratom is what they refer to in the medical community as an opiate with a roof where you can only get so high," one of them says, slurring his words.

Kratom is a tropical tree in the coffee family that's native to Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar and other areas of Southeast Asia. In this country its leaves are sold as a pill or as a powder to stir into a beverage.

In small doses, it acts as a stimulant. In higher doses, it becomes a sedative, according to the federal Drug Enforcement Administration.

The Ohio Attorney General Office's crime lab is constantly on the watch for this drug that has been used in Thailand for decades. Just last month, eight people in central Ohio were indicted for running a large-scale drug operation, which included the sale of kratom.

"It is illegal in Ohio to take it and sell it as a drug," says Jonathan Fulkerson, deputy chief counsel for Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine.

While kratom is on a federal watch list, it is widely available online and in a number of head shops in this area.

One WKYC-TV producer bought a bag of 30 pills for \$30 at the Twilight Boutique in suburban Lakewood, Ohio, after the clerk told him the pills could relieve pain and help induce sleep.

"He said it was one of those things where he used it for arthritis," the producer said. "He said it helped remove the pain."

Kratom is not approved for any medical purpose in the U.S. — including as a pain reliever — Fulkerson said.