

RESEARCH MONOGRAPH . COMPOUND PROFILE

Kava (Piper methysticum)

*A Pacific Island root containing
kavalactones with anxiolytic, sedative, and
muscle-relaxant activity through GABA-A
modulation and other mechanisms.*

DOCUMENT	KDC-MN-157
ISSUED	2026-05-09
REVISION	1.0
AUTHOR	Kodiac biolabs Research
COMPOUND CLASS	Pacific Island botanical / kavalactone source

RESEARCH USE ONLY

ABSTRACT

Kava (*Piper methysticum*) is a perennial shrub native to the Pacific Islands whose root has been used ceremonially and medicinally for centuries. The active constituents are kavalactones (kavain, dihydrokavain, methysticin, dihydromethysticin, yangonin, desmethoxyyangonin); the kavalactone profile varies among kava cultivars (the "noble" cultivars with kavain-dominant profiles being preferred for traditional use). Pharmacology includes GABA-A receptor modulation, voltage-gated sodium channel inhibition, and dopamine receptor effects. Hepatotoxicity has been reported with kava products, leading to bans in some European jurisdictions; the toxicity has been linked to particular cultivars or extraction methods rather than kava per se. Doses are typically 100 to 250 mg kavalactones per day.

1. Compound Identification

Kava (*Piper methysticum*) is described as pacific island botanical / kavalactone source. A Pacific Island root containing kavalactones with anxiolytic, sedative, and muscle-relaxant activity through GABA-A modulation and other mechanisms.

1.1 Class summary

Pacific Island botanical / kavalactone source

1.2 Subtitle

A Pacific Island root containing kavalactones with anxiolytic, sedative, and muscle-relaxant activity through GABA-A modulation and other mechanisms.

2. Abstract

Kava (*Piper methysticum*) is a perennial shrub native to the Pacific Islands whose root has been used ceremonially and medicinally for centuries. The active constituents are kavalactones (kavain, dihydrokavain, methysticin, dihydromethysticin, yangonin, desmethoxyyangonin); the kavalactone profile varies among kava cultivars (the "noble" cultivars with kavain-dominant profiles being preferred for traditional use). Pharmacology includes GABA-A receptor modulation, voltage-gated sodium channel inhibition, and dopamine receptor effects. Hepatotoxicity has been reported with kava products, leading to bans in some European jurisdictions; the toxicity has been linked to particular cultivars or extraction methods rather than kava per se. Doses are typically 100 to 250 mg kavalactones per day.

3. Mechanism of Action

Kavalactones with multiple targets: GABA-A modulation, voltage-gated sodium channel inhibition, dopamine effects.

The mechanistic profile described above represents the consensus position from peer-reviewed literature where available; for compounds with sparse formal characterization, this section reflects vendor-grade reports and structurally-related class pharmacology and should be interpreted with appropriate caution.

4. Pharmacokinetics and Routes of Administration

Pharmacokinetic data are summarized within the abstract for compounds with formal Phase 1 records. Compounds without published human pharmacokinetic studies are noted as such; investigators should treat the absence of data as a research limitation.

5. Reported Research Dose Ranges

100 to 250 mg kavalactones per day.

Doses are scaled from clinical use where the compound is approved as a medicine, from Phase 2/3 trials where development advanced, or from rodent dose-response data scaled by allometric assumptions where the compound has no human clinical record. Investigators should treat dose ranges from research-chemical-grade vendors as starting points for their own pharmacokinetic and tolerability characterization rather than validated dosing recommendations.

6. Sourcing and Quality Verification

Investigators should obtain analytical confirmation of identity (mass spectrometry; for peptides, additionally amino acid analysis or N-terminal sequencing) and purity (HPLC area-percent, ideally greater than 95 percent) on every lot. Vendor certificates of analysis vary in quality; third-party analytical confirmation through independent laboratories (e.g., Janoshik Analytical, Anabolic Lab) is the gold standard for research-grade peptides and small molecules.

For compounds with established pharmaceutical-grade marketing in any jurisdiction, sourcing from the marketed product (where legal and accessible) provides the highest quality assurance.

7. Reconstitution and Handling

Peptides should be reconstituted in bacteriostatic water or sterile water for injection in the volume appropriate to the desired concentration; lyophilized peptides should be allowed to come to room temperature before reconstitution to minimize precipitation. Reconstituted peptides should be stored refrigerated and used within the timeframe specified by the manufacturer (typically 14 to 30 days for bacteriostatic water reconstitutions, shorter for sterile water).

Small molecules: storage conditions vary by compound; consult the certificate of analysis for the specific product. Most are stable at room temperature in dry, dark conditions; oxidation-sensitive compounds (e.g., catecholamine precursors) require cool storage and protection from light.

8. Stack Interaction Considerations

Investigators combining this compound with other research substances should consider receptor-level interactions (additive effects at shared targets), enzyme-level interactions (CYP-mediated drug-drug interactions where applicable), and pharmacodynamic interactions (additive sedation, additive serotonergic activity, additive hemodynamic effects).

The stack interaction section in published monographs of well-characterized compounds is necessarily incomplete for any specific combination; investigators should treat novel combinations with elevated caution and titrate gradually.

9. References

1. Sarris J, et al. Kava in the treatment of generalized anxiety disorder: a double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled study. J Clin Psychopharmacol 2013.

This monograph is provided for research use only. Not for medical, diagnostic, or therapeutic purposes. Not for human consumption. Compound class generalizations are noted where compound-specific data are sparse; investigators should weight the evidence accordingly.