kava-kava (Piper Methysticum)  (ka-va-ka-va)

Other Name(s): Ava pepper, intoxicating pepper, kau, kur, tonga, warakulik, yagona

Classification
Therapeutic: anti-anxiety agents, sedative/hypnotics

Common Uses
Anxiety, stress, restlessness, insomnia, benzodiazepine withdrawal. Mild muscle aches and pains. Menstrual cramps and PMS.

Action
Acts on the limbic system modulation of emotional processes. Shown to have centrally-acting skeletal muscle relaxant properties activated. Therapeutic Effects: Relief of anxiety. Sedation.

Pharmacokinetics
Absorption: Peak plasma level occurs about 1.8 hr after an oral dose.
Distribution: Enters breast milk.
Metabolism and Excretion: Elimination occurs primarily by renal excretion (both unchanged and metabolites) and in the feces. Metabolized by the liver (reduction or demethylation).
Half-life: Approximately 9 hr.

TIME/ACTION PROFILE
ROUTE ONSET PEAK DURATION
PO 1.8 hr unknown 8 hr

Contraindications/Precautions
Contraindicated in: OB, Lactation: Pregnancy (may affect uterine tone) and lactation; Patients with endogenous depression (may q risk of suicide); Children <12 yr; Hepatitis or other liver disease.

Use Cautiously in: Concurrent use of other hepatotoxic agents; Depression and Parkinson’s disease (may worsen symptoms); Should not be used concurrently with antiplatelet agents. May ↑ risk of liver damage with other hepatotoxic agents.

Adverse Reactions/Side Effects

Interactions
Natural Product-Drug: Additive effect when used with alprazolam. Potentiates effect of CNS depressants (ethanol, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, opioid analgesics). May ↓ effectiveness of levodopa in few cases. May have additive effects with antiplatelet agents. May ↑ risk of liver damage with other hepatotoxic agents.

Route/Commonly Used Doses
PO (Adults): Antianxiety—100 mg (70 mg kavalactones) 3 times daily; Benzodiazepine withdrawal—50–300 mg/day over one week while tapering benzodiazepines over 2 weeks (use 70% kavalactone extract). Insomnia—180–210 mg kavalamtes. Typically taken as a tea by simmering the root in boiling water and then straining.

NURSING IMPLICATIONS
Assessment
● Assess muscle spasm, associated pain, and limitations of movement prior to and periodically during therapy.
● Assess degree of anxiety and level of sedation (visual disturbances and changes in sensor function are side effects) prior to and periodically during therapy.
● Assess sleep patterns and level of sedation upon arising.
● Monitor for myopathy, proximal weakness, and ↓ liver function tests.

Potential Nursing Diagnoses
Anxiety (Indications)
Impaired physical mobility (Adverse Reactions)
Risk for injury (Side Effects)

MEDICATION CLASSIFICATION
Therapeutic: anti-anxiety agents, sedative/hypnotics

MEDICATION CONSIDERATIONS
Contraindicated in: Dilution, head; dose; see, sensory; dis; anti-emetic; anti-epileptic; CNS stimulants; opioid analgesics; anti-platelet agents; anti-depressants; anti-psychotics; anti-histamines; sedative agents; alcohol; barbiturates; valproic acid; anti-epileptics; sulpiride; anti-convulsant medications; anti-platelet agents; anti-histamines; anticoagulants; aspirin; non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents; salicylates; quinidine; potassium; calcium-channel blockers; nitroglycerin; antihypertensives; sildenafil; cimetidine; ciclosporin; danazol; diltiazem; digoxin; disulfiram; etidronate; fluoxetine; intravenous narcotics; indomethacin; lidocaine; meperidine; omeprazole; penicillins; phenothiazines; propranolol; quinine; ranitidine; rifampin; salicylates; sulfonylureas; tricyclic antidepressants; vancomycin; warfarin; and zidovudine.

Adverse Reactions/Side Effects

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Natural-Natural Products: Concurrent use with other hepatotoxic products such as DHEA, coenzyme Q-10 (high doses), and niacin can ↑ risk of liver damage. May have additive sedative effects when used with other herbs with sedative properties.

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Potential Nursing Diagnoses
Anxiety (Indications)
Impaired physical mobility (Adverse Reactions)
Risk for injury (Side Effects)
Implementation
- Prepared as a drink from pulverized roots, tablets, capsules, or extract.

Patient/Family Teaching
- Inform patient that significant, serious side effects may occur with prolonged use.
  Use for longer than 1 mo is not recommended without supervision of health care professional.
- Caution patient to avoid alcohol or other CNS depressants while taking this herb; may increase sedative effect.
- May cause drowsiness. Caution patient to avoid driving or other activities requiring alertness until response is known.
- Warn patients to stop use of the herb immediately if shortness of breath or signs of liver disease (yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes, brown urine, nausea, vomiting, light-colored stools, unusual tiredness, weakness, stomach or abdominal pain, loss of appetite) occur and contact health care professional.
- Advise patients who have liver disease or liver problems, or persons who are taking drug products that can affect the liver, to consult health care professional before using kava-containing supplements.
- Inform patient that although there is no evidence of physiological dependence, the risk of psychological dependence still exists.
- Advise female patients to use contraception during therapy and to notify health care professional immediately if pregnancy is planned or suspected or if breast feeding.
- Instruct patient to consult health care professional before taking any Rx, OTC, or herbal products concurrently with kava-kava.

Evaluation
- Decrease in anxiety level.
- Decrease in muscle spasms.
- Relief of insomnia.

Why was this drug prescribed for your patient?