



Kava Kava

Kavalactones have been shown to relieve anxiety and pain and relax muscles in laboratory animals. In humans, they have been shown to change brain activity (as measured by an electroencephalogram) without sedation. A recent study showed that people taking measured doses of a kava extract fared better in word-recognition tests than those taking a synthetic tranquilizer (benzodiazepine), and a 1993 report in the British Journal of Phytotherapy referred to kava as one of a few herbs that can safely relax skeletal muscle. The report's author recommended it for treating nervous tension and conditions associated with skeletal muscle spasms, such as headaches caused by a tense neck.

In 1996, a randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind study showed that kava significantly reduced anxiety in humans. Two groups of twenty-nine people with normal anxiety were treated for four weeks with three daily doses of 100 mg of kava rhizome extract or a placebo. After one week of treatment, members of the kava group had significantly lower anxiety levels compared with that of the placebo group, and the difference between the two groups increased during the course of the study. No adverse reactions to the kava extract were noted during the study.