

Been drinking  
kava?

Stop and think ...  
Will my driving  
endanger my passengers  
or other road users?

If in doubt,  
don't drive!



For more information on:

- [the cultural importance of kava](#)
- [kava use and safety](#)
- [kava and driving](#), see:

[www.aporosa.net/kava-and-driving](http://www.aporosa.net/kava-and-driving)



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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

Photographs by award winning photographer Todd M. Henry


# KAVA AND DRIVING

IT'S ABOUT RESPECT



**TRG**  
Transport Research Group





***Did you know drinking kava can affect how well you drive?***

The police and government are increasingly concerned about the effect that kava use is having on safe driving. This has led to three major studies funded by the New Zealand Government.

**What is kava?**

Kava is a culturally important plant and drink for Pacific people, and a key part of many Pacific celebrations and social occasions.

For many people, drinking kava is relaxing and encourages clear-headed discussions. As a result, kava is often drunk in sociable groups, over many hours, and late into the night.

Kava is not alcohol and does not affect drinkers in the same ways that alcohol does. It is non-addictive, safe to use, and has a number of health benefits.

This makes it very popular, with non-Pacific people also increasingly using kava. Kava is now drunk all around the world.

**What effects can kava have?**

Studies have shown that drinking kava can slow thinking and decision-making. This, in turn, affects how safely people drive.

For those who drink concentrated (strongly mixed) kava, similar to what is consumed in Vanuatu and some areas in the west Pacific, these negative effects can come on faster. In places where kava is mixed less strong, such as Tonga and Samoa, the effects take longer to develop.

Either way, drinking kava can make it unsafe to drive.

**It's an offence to drive impaired by kava**

It is against the law to drive a motor vehicle when impaired by kava. If stopped by the police, you risk being arrested, losing your licence and possibly going to prison.

More importantly, driving while impaired by kava puts your own safety at risk, as well as your passengers and other road users. If you kill or injure someone when under the influence of kava, you could be sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

**It's all about respect**

Pacific people value respect.

Respect also underpins kava use.

Respect drives Pacific values such as gudfala tingting mo fasin, vakaturaga, anga fakaTonga, fa'aSamoa, kauraro Rarotonga, ke'ano pono and tikanga.

So if you've been drinking kava, stop and think: Am I respecting my passengers and other road users?

Could my driving be putting them in danger?

***If in doubt,  
don't drive!***