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CHASER CONSUMPTION DURING KAVA SESSIONS IS A CONTRIBUTOR TO NCDs

(Diabetes, Cancer, Blood Pressure and Chronic Respiratory Diseases)



Do you know how much money is spent on kava in a year?

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fijians spent about \$330 million on kava in 2016 alone¹. This makes kava one of Fiji's most important agricultural industries. Ninety percent (90%) of kava produced in Fiji is for the domestic market, while the remaining 10% gets exported². Such an excessive consumption has become a major social issue affecting families and their household budgets.

Why should we be worrying about excessive kava consumption?

Serious kava drinkers usually sit for long durations on a daily basis with very little movement of the body. Such individuals, who drink kava till late hours, suffer from a lack of rest and sleep and poor eating habits. All these factors contribute to NCDs. Furthermore, kava also makes people calm or sleepy, affecting productivity the next day.

Now add chaser consumption habits to the effects of immobility

Chaser is usually consumed with kava to remove the bitter taste or numbing effect of kava from an individual's tongue. Therefore, these chasers help people to continue drinking kava in excessive amounts even though it is bitter and the body cannot take it any further.

Did you know that consuming chaser during kava session is actually contributing to NCDs?

About 95% of NCDs are due to lifestyle choices. Consumer's day-to-day decisions, what consumers do and what they eat, has a huge impact on consumer health. Kava drinkers that have a habit of consuming chasers during their drinking sessions, do not pay attention to what's in their chaser items. Most chasers consumed in these grog sessions are high in salt, sugar and fat. Consuming these in large amounts contributes to weight gain or obesity, high blood sugar levels (Hyperglycemia) leading to diabetes and high blood pressure. Those who smoke cigarettes while drinking kava are also at risk as half of all long-term smokers eventually die of cancer.



¹ Ministry of Agriculture – Kava Value Chain Analysis

² Fijians spent about \$330M on kava last year <http://fijivillage.com/news/Fijians-spent-about-330M-on-kava-last-year-952ksr>

THE TABLE BELOW HIGHLIGHTS SOME OF THE COMMON KAVA CHASERS AND THEIR NUTRIENT CONTENTS.

Salt and Sugar Contents in Chasers

Item/Drink	Quantity (mg/g/ml/L)	Sugar Content	Salt Content	Fat Content	Calories
Coca-Cola	600 ml	✓ 13 tsps.	-	-	258
Coca-Cola	355 ml	✓ 9.5 tsps.	-	-	153
Sprite	600 ml	✓ 16 tsps.	-	-	258
Sweet Cake	100 g	✓ 4 tsps.	-	-	450
Mixed Bhuja	20 g	-	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ 1.5 tsps.	-
Chicken Flavored Peas	20 g	-	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ <1 tsp.	-
Jason's Fruit Harvest Lolly	1 Candy	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ <1 tsp.	-
Jason's Flat Lolly Pop	1 Candy	✓ 2.5tsps.	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ <1 tsp.	-
Tinned Peanuts	180 g	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ 8 tsps.	200
Fine-fare Nice Biscuits	17 g (2 Biscuits)	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ <1 tsp.	-
Bongo	20 g	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ 1 tsp.	-
Chinese Lolly (Red Prune)	20 g	✓ 1 tsp.	✓ <1 tsp.	-	40
Salty Ginger	30 g	-	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ <1 tsp.	-
Pawpaw Skin (Preserved Papaya)	42 g	✓ 1 tsp.	✓ <1 tsp.	-	-
Dried Black Plum	42 g	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ <1 tsp.	-	-
Super Blo - Chewing Gum	1 Chewing Gum	✓ 2 tsps.	✓ <1 tsp.	-	-
Kopiko candy	100 g	✓ 14 tsps.	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ 2 tsps.	-
Jason's Hex Lolly	1 Candy	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ <1 tsp.	✓ <1 tsp.	-

Source: Product labels *Verified by Ministry of Health and Medical Services

NOW, IT'S TIME TO ASK YOURSELF: HOW MUCH OF THESE DO YOU CONSUME DURING THE DAY AND HOW MUCH DO YOU CONSUME WHILE DRINKING KAVA?

Did you know that the amount of sugar and salt you are consuming from chasers is more than the recommended daily intake?

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services recommend that an individual should consume:

- 1 teaspoon salt per day (inclusive of hidden salts)
- 5 teaspoons of sugar per day (inclusive of hidden sugars)
- 2000-calories intake per day for adults
- Fat should be less than 30% of the total energy consumed, which equates to about 10-12 teaspoons

How serious is the chaser problem?

On average, an individual consumes a 355ml can of carbonated (soft) drink, a lollipop and mixed peas while drinking kava. That adds up to 12 teaspoons of sugar and at least another teaspoon of salt.

Thus, it becomes clear that an individual consumes at least an extra 7 teaspoons of sugar and 1 teaspoon of salt through chaser during kava consumption which is double the recommended daily intake. This excludes the three meals one eats in a day.

IF YOU DRINK KAVA AND NEED CHASER, CHOOSE YOUR CHASER WISELY!

Choose healthy chasers low in fat, sugar and salt.

Consume kava and chaser in moderation to avoid Cancer, Blood Pressure, Diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases.

Be mindful of the chasers you consume and the amount of physical activity required to burn off the extra sugar and salt intake.

Have you ever wondered how much intensive exercise you need to do to burn off the calories consumed from chasers?

Let's take an example of the most common chaser - a can of carbonated (soft) drink. A 355ml can contains at least 9.5 teaspoons of sugar. This equates to at least an intensive 25 minutes in an aerobics class to burn off this extra sugar intake.



Most people consume at least 2 cans during a kava session. Do you think they do at least 50 minutes of intensive exercise to burn off the extra sugar intake?



This unhealthy lifestyle of consuming kava for long periods and consuming chasers with high sugar and salt contents, increases the risk of NCDs. Many Fijians are not taking an active approach to NCD prevention through a healthy lifestyle. Which is why, in 2016, Fiji was ranked second in the world among countries with the highest rate of deaths from diabetes³.

³ World Life Expectancy Diabetes Report

