

Drug Testing – Frequently Asked Questions

Why Do Employers Drug Test?

Alcohol and drug abuse create significant safety and health hazards and can result in decreased productivity and poor employee morale. It also can lead to additional costs in the form of health care claims, especially short-term disability claims. Common reasons employers implement drug testing are to:

- Deter employees from abusing alcohol and drugs
- Prevent hiring individuals who use illegal drugs
- Be able to identify early and appropriately refer employees who have drug and/or alcohol problems
- Provide a safe workplace for employees
- Protect the general public and instill consumer confidence that employees are working safely
- Comply with State laws or Federal regulations
- Benefit from Workers' Compensation Premium Discount programs

Why Drug Screening?

Because America's drug problem is much bigger than most people assume.

When are Drug Tests Conducted?

There are a variety of circumstances under which an organization may require a drug test.

- Pre-Employment: Pre-employment testing is conducted to prevent hiring individuals who illegally use drugs. Applicants agree to be tested as a condition of employment and are not hired if they fail to produce a negative test.
- Reasonable Suspicion: Reasonable suspicion testing is similar to, and sometimes referred to, as "probable-cause" or "for-cause" testing and is conducted when supervisors document observable signs and symptoms that lead them to suspect drug use or a drug-free workplace policy violation.
- Post-Accident: Since property damage or personal injury may result from accidents, testing following an accident can help determine whether drugs and/or alcohol were a factor.

- **Random:** Random testing is performed unannounced on employees. This selection is computer generated to ensure that it is indeed random and that each person of the workforce population has an equal chance of being selected for testing, regardless of whether that person was recently tested or not. Because this type of testing has no advance notice, it serves as a deterrent.
- **Return-to-Duty:** Return-to-duty testing involves a one-time, announced test when an employee who has tested positive has completed the required treatment for substance abuse and is ready to return to the workplace.
- **Promotion:** Applicants agree to be tested as a condition of employment and are not promoted if they fail to produce a negative test.

What is a Chain of Custody?

A chain-of-custody form is used to document the handling and storage of a sample from the time it is collected until the time it is disposed. It links an individual to his or her sample and is written proof of all that happens to the specimen while at the collection site and the laboratory.

What is a Confirmation Test?

A second, confirmation test (by gas chromatography/mass spectrometry or GC/MS) is highly accurate and provides specificity to help rule out any false positives (Non-Negatives) from the initial screen. For a test result to be reported as positive, the initial screen and confirmation test results must agree.

What are the Collection Procedures and Protocol?

We follow strict Department of Transportation Collection Procedures and Protocol and SAMSHA guidelines including:

- Proper identification of the donor
- Secure collection facility, minimizing potential for adulteration of specimens
- Check for possible adulteration of each specimen
- Completion of Custody and Control forms following Chain of Custody protocol
- Storage and transportation to SAMSHA confirmatory labs of all Non-Negative & DOT specimens
- Secure reporting of results to designated employer representative via secure fax or email

What is Hair Drug testing?

Hair testing is the most accurate and effective method of finding users of drugs of abuse. Using a small sample of hair cut at the scalp, hair analysis evaluates the amount of drug metabolites embedded inside the hair shaft.

How Long are Drugs in One’s System?

Drugs have certain “detection windows”—the amount of time after ingestion during which evidence of their use can be detected by a drug test. The following chart provides detection timelines for commonly tested drug panels

Drug Tested	Also known As	10 Panel Test	5 Panel Test	Detection Time in Urine
AMP Amphetamine	Speed	X	X	1 – 2 Days
BAR Barbiturates	Downers, Barbs, Goof Balls, Reds, Yellow Jackets	X		2 Days - 3 Weeks
BZO Benzodiazepines	Bennies	X		3 Days - 6 Weeks
COC Cocaine	Coke, Crack, Rock cocaine	X	X	2 – 4 Days
MAMP Methamphetamine	Speed, Ice, Chrystal, Crank	X	X	1 – 2 Days
MDMA 3,4 Methylenedioxy-methamphetamine	Ecstasy, XTC, ADAM, Lover’s Speed	X		1 – 2 Days
MTD Methadone	Fizzies	X		3 Days
OPI2 Opiates	Codeine	X	X	2 Days
PCP Phencyclidine		X		6 hrs - 2 Days
THC Cannabinioids / Marijuana	Dope, Weed, Hemp, Hash, Colombian, Sinsemilla	X	X	2 Days - 2 Months

Hair testing for drugs of abuse provides up to a 90-day drug use history.

How is Drug Testing Conducted?

Generally, most private employers have a fair amount of latitude in implementing drug testing as they see fit for their organization, unless they are subject to certain Federal regulations, such as the U.S. Department of Transportation’s (DOT) drug-testing rules for employees in safety-sensitive positions. However, Federal agencies conducting drug testing must follow

standardized procedures established by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

While private employers are not required to follow these guidelines, doing so can help them stay on safe legal ground. Court decisions have supported following these guidelines, and as a result, many employers choose to follow them. These Mandatory Guidelines for Federal Workplace Drug Testing (also called SAMHSA’s guidelines) include having a Medical Review Officer (MRO) evaluate tests.

The most common method of drug testing, urinalysis, an employee or applicant provides a sample to be tested. Usually precautions are taken, such as putting blue dye in the toilet to prevent adulteration or substitution of specimens so that collection can be completed in privacy without any direct visual observation by another person.

Under SAMHSA’s guidelines, once a sample is provided, it is sent to a certified laboratory. The accuracy of drug tests done by certified laboratories is very high, but this certification applies only to the five substances tested for in Federal drug-testing programs and alcohol.

Drug Also Known As Overview:

Drug Tested	Also Known As
AMP Amphetamine/ Methamphetamine	Speed, Uppers, Whites, Dexies, Crank, Black Beauties, Benny, Crystal, Jelly Beans, White Cross
BAR Barbiturates	Downers, Barbs, Goof Balls, Reds, Yellows, Blues, Dolls, M&M’s, Red Devils
BZO Benzodiazepines	Bennies, Downers, Tranqs
COC Cocaine	Coke, Crack, Rock cocaine
MDMA 3,4 Methylenedioxy-methamphetamine	Ecstasy, XTC, ADAM, Lover’s Speed, X, Hug Drug, Beans, Love Drug
MTD Methadone	Fizzies, Done, Dolophine, Methadose, Dolls
OPI Opiates	Codeine (School Boy), Morphine (M, Miss Emma), Heroin (Smack, Horse, Junk, China White)
PCP Phencyclidine	Angel Dust, Devil Stick, Dummy Dust, Wack
THC Cannabinoids / Marijuana	Dope, Weed, Hemp, Hash, Colombian, Sinsemilla, Pot, Reefer, Joint, Smoke, Weed

Difference between Urine and Hair Drug Screen

Many employers find it useful to test both hair and urine for pre-employment purposes. Urine is useful for detecting recent or new drug use (last 1-3 days except Marijuana which is longer) and hair for providing an approximate three-month drug history.

Can Hair testing be beaten?

We have not found any adulterants that can beat the test at this time. Moreover, the risk is minimized because every collection is directly and easily observed. Bleaches, shampoos and external contaminants (i.e. marijuana smoke) have no known impact on test results. Testing measures the drug molecules embedded inside the hair shaft, eliminating external contamination as a source of a positive test result. Hair testing results cannot be altered with shampoos or other external chemicals.

How are the hair samples collected?

In order to be fair to the donor, we must have enough hair to repeat assays if necessary.