

9) **How is the urine sample collected?**

The sample will always be collected under controlled conditions. This will include use of a specially prepared toilet, which maximises the security of collection as well as giving maximum possible consideration to individual privacy. Depending on the reason for the test and the requirements of your employer, the passing of the sample may need to be directly supervised but if so this will be done under strictly controlled medical conditions.

10) **How do I know that my specimen will not be tampered with?**

The specimen is collected and sealed with tamper evident tape in your full view. From this point on the sample is handled under full chain of custody conditions. All staff who handle the sample through to the analyst who finally breaks the seal at the time of commencing analysis inspect the seal and certify that it is undisturbed. This is the same level of security used in police sample handling.

11) **What if I want independent testing?**

If you requested that the sample be split into two jars at the point of collection and provided sufficient urine for this to happen, the second sample is available and can be retested by a different laboratory at your request and at your expense. The original sample jar is also stored frozen for a minimum of 12 months (if it was positive) and can be retested at a different laboratory if required.

12) **Who do I contact if I have any queries?**

Your first point of contact will be your employer or their appointed delegate (often the Workplace Health & Safety Officer, Personnel Supervisor or Human Resources Manager). If they are unable to assist with your enquiry, they will usually contact our toxicologist and report back to you. In order to protect your privacy we are not at liberty to discuss findings directly with a person who telephones us claiming to be the subject.

13) **If I have been prescribed a drug for a medical condition, how do I know if it is going to show up in my drug test?**

If you are in any doubt, you should check with the doctor who prescribed your medication. Only the prescribing doctor can make the assessment of whether you are safe to work in your current job environment whilst on the medication in question. Your doctor will also be able to find out if the drug will show up in a urine drug test. A urine drug test when properly conducted in a laboratory will be able to differentiate prescription and 'over the counter' medications from illicit drugs.

14) **Can poppy seeds cause a positive result?**

Poppy seeds that are available in supermarkets or are sold on bread or bakery products can contain some morphine and low concentrations of other opiates. Ingestion of reasonable amounts of these products can cause an initial positive result for the opiate class. However, confirmatory testing by GC/MS will identify if any morphine or heroin abuse has occurred.

15) **Would menstruation effect testing?**

No.

Questions & Answers about Drug and Alcohol Testing in the Workplace



For further information contact the your employer or OH&S Manager.

This information leaflet has been prepared and published by Mayne Pathology for the information of referring doctors and corporate clients. Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information enclosed, readers are advised that it is not a substitute for detailed professional advice.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Through Workplace Health and Safety Legislation, employers have a responsibility to provide a healthy and safe working environment and to identify and manage hazards in the workplace. As part of this responsibility, the practice of detection and management of the risks associated with misuse of drugs and alcohol amongst employees and contractors is increasing in Australian workplaces.

This brochure is to assist you in understanding drug and alcohol testing in your workplace and to answer some commonly asked questions. For further information you should talk to your employer or OH&S Manager.



1) What are the benefits to employees and employers in implementing a drug and alcohol policy and testing procedure?

Many organisations implement a drug and alcohol policy and testing procedure as part of their duty of care to employees. A program when properly implemented can be a positive condition of employment for all employees since it will give them the confidence that, at least as far as drugs and alcohol are concerned, their colleagues are fit for work. An employer's duty of care includes the requirement to provide a safe workplace and one of the aspects of a workplace that needs to be addressed is the problem of drug and alcohol impaired employees. Employers need to have a means of identifying employees at risk of drug and alcohol impairment and also clear policy guidelines for dealing with the individual concerned. These guidelines need to detail how the individual concerned should be rehabilitated to return the employee to fitness for work.

2) When or why is drug and alcohol testing performed?

Drug testing is frequently performed as part of pre-employment assessment and ongoing workplace health and safety programs and in relation to incidents (accidents) which have occurred in the workplace. Handled sensitively, neither is seen as a cause for undue concern for prospective or current employees. Frequency of testing is determined by individual company policies or as deemed necessary.

3) How long after use is the drug detectable in the body?

Drugs may remain in the body for weeks or months after use. That time is determined by characteristics of the drug and of the individual involved. However when the cut-off levels defined in the Standard are applied, the length of time for which each test will return a positive finding is markedly 'tightened'. The following may be used as an indication:

Drug	Detection Time
Alcohol	2-14 hours depending on consumption
Amphetamines	2 to 7 days
Barbiturates	2 to 21 days
Benzodiazepines	Up to 4 to 6 weeks if prolonged usage or high dose
Cocaine	2 to 4 days
Cannabis	Varies with the duration of and amount used Single casual use - 12 hours to 5 days Heavy use - up to 8 weeks
Methadone	3 days
Opiates	3 days

4) Is the specimen checked for adulteration?

If the sample is analysed in a laboratory, most interfering substances are checked, including all of the common adulterants as well as the commercially available adulterants (ie. UrineLuck, Whizzies etc). Some adulterants can have their effect removed from the sample to enable the laboratory to continue to test the sample whilst others prevent the sample from being tested. In the latter case, the sample is reported as unsuitable for testing due to adulteration and recollection is suggested.

5) What if my specimen is diluted?

If you drink more than 2-3 cups of water before having your urine collected, you may provide a sample, which is dilute. This is determined by measuring the level of creatinine in the urine. If the creatinine level is too low, the sample will be tested but a warning is issued with the results. If repeated dilute samples are provided and no valid medical cause exists, intentional dilution in order to avoid the drug detection must be considered.

6) Who receives the results of the drug screen?

As with all laboratory results, the provisions of current privacy legislation apply. Your results are strictly confidential and will only be released to parties for whom you have given us authorisation.

7) What happens if people are smoking cannabis and I accidentally inhale some?

Passive inhalation of cannabis smoke cannot cause a positive result on a drug test unless the exposure has been extreme. You will be aware of this exposure.

8) Do I need to bring anything for the drug screen?

You will need to bring some form of positive identification, which has a laminated photo with signature from a recognised organisation (ie drivers licence, passport etc). Credit cards and Medicare cards cannot be accepted as proof of identification.