

Drug testing



Drug testing

Drug testing is becoming more sophisticated; laboratories conduct studies that isolate and recognise specific components of both illegal and over the counter drugs to try and avoid false positives. But it is still not an exact science:

- For instance the use of codeine in many prescription drugs would result in a positive result if someone was tested for opiates.
- Although the levels in saliva, urine, hair, blood and sweat can be measured the relation between a certain level of a drug and its effect is not always clear. For recreational drugs there is no established relation between a certain drug concentration and effect and – in relationship to driving – no determined threshold dose above which an effect would occur. This is especially important in relation to cannabis because detectable amounts can persist for days after the effect has worn off.

DRUG / DRUG TYPE	DRUG DETECTION TIMES
Alcohol	6 hours to 1 day
Amphetamines	1 to 4 days
Benzodiazepines	Short-term Therapeutic Use: 3 days. Long-term Chronic Use: 4 to 6 weeks
Cocaine	2 to 5 days
LSD	1 to 4 days
Marijuana	Casual Use: up to 7 days. Chronic Use: up to 30 days or longer Note: THC, Marijuana's primary psychoactive ingredient, is stored by the body in fatty lipid tissue. From there, it is slowly released into the bloodstream and urine for up to several weeks. Chronic users and individuals with high body fat count are at the greatest risk of long-term detection.
MDMA	1 to 4 days
Mescaline	1 to 4 days
Methadone	1 to 7 days
Methamphetamines	1 to 4 days
Nicotine	1 to 2 days
Opiates	1 to 4 days
Propoxyphene	1 to 7 days
Psilocybin (Mushrooms)	1 to 3 days
Steroids (Anabolic)	Oral: 2 to 3 weeks. Injected: 1 to 3 months. Nandrolone: up to 9 months
Tricyclic Antidepressants	1 to 9 days

TYPES OF TESTING	Urine	Saliva	Sweat	Blood	Hair
DETECTION TIME	2/3 days	24 hours	24 hours to 2/3 days	up to 31 hours	1 week to 18 months
RELIABILITY	Most researched. Has been around for 20 years. Best test for cannabis use. Sample needs to be stored and preserved properly. More open to fraud (substitution of samples). On-site positive result needs lab confirmation.	Good for recent drug use (cannabis and opiates in particular) but a mouth wash would adulterate on-site test. Samples need refrigeration. Dipsticks can be used for on-site results (eg. can test saliva at the road side) positives need lab confirmation.	Drug patches used mainly for monitoring. Detect up to a week while worn. Drugs swipes up to 24 hours but not very reliable. Police have tried but doesn't work efficiently.	Open to fraud, sample needs careful storage and preservation, needs lab analysis. Not done for on-site results.	Cannot detect alcohol. Not appropriate to detect recent use, needs lab analysis.

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factsheet