

Types of Drug Testing

Urinalysis-

- Most common, least expensive
- Can provide information on the presence of both alcohol and drugs.
- Provides more specific information beyond whether the drug is in the bloodstream, it can also measure the amount of the drug present.
- Can detect drug use (not alcohol) within the last 2 to 3 days. Heavy cannabis or phencyclidine use can be detected for up to a week or longer.
- Cannot determine if the client is currently intoxicated, how much they use, or how often they use.
- False positive are possible, false negative are much more common.
- Test results can be adulterated by the user placing someone else's urine in their cup or by adulterating the urine sample to interfere with its analysis (i.e. putting bleach in the sample).

Breath Testing-

- Most common to determine the presence of alcohol.
- Widely used because it is noninvasive, accurate when properly administered, portable, inexpensive, quick, and easy to use.
- This tool is typically used as a screening tool, followed by additional assessment.

Saliva Test-

- More expensive than urine testing, but cheaper than blood or hair test (\$15 to \$75).
- Relatively not intrusive and as a result are becoming more common.
- Easy to administer, but do require a processing at a lab.
- Can detect use within the past few days, and is known for its ability to better detect recent use.
- Can most reliably detect Methamphetamine and Opiate
- Less trustworthy in the detection of THC or Cannabinoids.

Blood Tests-

- Can tell the examiner about heavy alcohol use from the past weeks to yrs.
- Another test shows them information regarding recent heavy drinking.
- However, the tests' accuracy is affected by the overall health of the individual, and the presence of other drugs.
- Due to the low reliability of blood tests, they are typically only used for screening questionnaires and a client's clinical record.

Hair follicle Drug Test-

- Requires a sample of hair about the width of a pencil. These are cut - not pulled - from close to the scalp to obtain the most recent growth.
- The sample is liquefied and screened like a urine sample, and five types of drugs - stimulants, pot, coke, opiates and PCP - can be detected.
- Because hair grows at the rate of one half inch per month, a 1 ½ inch sample will show any drugs used within the last 90 days.
- Cannot identify drugs used within the last five to seven days, invalidating it for immediate use.
- Difficult to tamper with, unlike urine, which can be diluted or contaminated. Bleaching your hair does not make a difference.
- The only problem with relying 100 percent on a hair drug test is that the results may be skewed slightly according to the shade, and type, of your hair.

Fingernail Drug Testing-

- Fingernail clippings can be tested for the presence of drugs.
- The major disadvantage of this method is that it take 5 to 6 months of growth before a nail can be clipped.
- Thus, recent drug use cannot be detected or measured.
- The most useful application of this method is in the post-mortem setting.