

# Substance Abuse Testing

## Why am I having this test?

Substance abuse testing is done to identify the presence of drugs in the body. You may have this test to measure the levels of certain medicines or illegal drugs in your body.

Substance abuse testing is most often used by employers and law enforcement agencies to identify whether a person has used illegal drugs. You may also have this test if you are involved in an accident at work.

## What is being tested?

A substance abuse test may check for:

- Medicines that you have been prescribed, such as pain medicine or ADHD medicine.
- Illegal drugs, such as heroin, cocaine, amphetamines, and marijuana.

## What kind of sample is taken?

Your health care provider may collect one or more of the following to perform the test:

- A urine sample. A test sample is collected by passing urine into a clean cup.
- A hair sample. This requires cutting a collection of hair from your head or body that is about the width of a pencil. Hair may be taken from your head, chest, underarms, legs, or face.
- A blood sample. This is usually collected by inserting a needle into a blood vessel.



## How do I prepare for this test?

You may be asked to provide a list of your current prescription medicines. If the test is required for employment or legal reasons, you will be asked to give permission (*consent*) for the test.

Before providing a sample, you may be asked to put all of your belongings in a locker or other safe location, and you may be asked to wash your hands. Follow the specific directions of the lab or department that is doing the test.



## Tell a health care provider about:

- Any allergies you have.
- All medicines you are taking, including vitamins, herbs, eye drops, creams, and over-the-counter medicines.
- Any blood disorders you have.
- Any surgeries you have had.
- Any medical conditions you have.
- Whether you are pregnant or may be pregnant.



## How are the results reported?

Your test results will be reported as either positive or negative.

## **What do the results mean?**

A negative test result means that no drugs or medicines were found in the sample that you provided.

A positive test result may mean that you have recently used drugs or taken a medicine. If your result is positive, more testing will be done to confirm the presence of drugs.

Talk with your health care provider or the department that is doing the test about what your results mean.

## **Questions to ask your health care provider**

Ask your health care provider, or the department that is doing the test:

- When will my results be ready?
- How will I get my results?
- What are my treatment options?
- What other tests do I need?
- What are my next steps?

## **Summary**

- Substance abuse testing is done to identify the presence of drugs in the body.
- Substance abuse testing is most often used by employers and law enforcement agencies to identify whether a person has used illegal drugs. You may also have this test if you are involved in an accident at work.
- You may be asked to provide a list of your current prescription medicines. If the test is required for employment or legal reasons, you will be asked to give permission (*consent*) for the test.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.