

# Drug Testing

## Questions and Answers

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

### **Q** What is drug testing?

**A** Drug testing is a medical means to test for various drugs in the body.

### **Q** How is drug testing completed?

**A** There are three primary types of drug tests: blood, urine and hair.

#### **Blood tests**

- Are the most expensive
- Are the most accurate method of testing
- Are the least common
- Will determine if the person is under the influence at the time of testing

#### **Urine tests**

- Are the least expensive
- Are less intrusive than a blood test
- Can be tampered with to skew the results

#### **Hair tests** (hair must be at least 1.5 inches long)

- Are more expensive than urine tests
- Are considered the least intrusive
- Detect substance use for the past 90 days

### **Q** How long can different drugs be detected in the system?

**A** All detection times are approximate, depending on:

- how much was used
- how recently used
- how often used
- the potency of the drugs
- the individual's metabolism
- fluid intake

### **Urinalysis Drug Screening**

Alcohol .....	6-24 hours
Amphetamines .....	1-4 days
Barbiturates .....	1-21 days
Benzodiazepines.....	1-42 days
Cocaine .....	1-4 days
Ecstasy .....	1-4 days
Heroin/opiates .....	1-3 days
LSD .....	1-4 days
Marijuana .....	1-30 days
Phencyclidine .....	1-14 days

### **Hair Analysis**

Approximate detection times depend on the length of the hair sample. Each half inch represents approximately 30 days. Drugs used in the last two weeks cannot be detected. The same drugs listed above may be tested.

### **Q** Where can I go for a drug screen?

**A** Drug testing can be a part of a drug and alcohol assessment that includes an interview by a professional counselor. In addition:

- Physicians can provide drug screening.
- Some drug and alcohol treatment centers can provide testing without a doctor's order.
- Home tests can work if directions are closely followed. *Note: Home tests that offer immediate results are for initial screening and will need to be processed further in a laboratory.*

Information compiled by Cathy Cratty and Amy Byrne. Township High School District 113 Student Assistance Program in Highland Park, IL. Published in *Student Assistance Journal* (Vol. 14, Number 4, Fall 2002)