

Saliva Drug Tests New Method of Drug Testing

The U.S. federal government has overhauled the drug testing program of federal employees to include testing of workers' saliva, hair, and sweat. This change is expected to be a catalyst for business to modify their drug screening methods and procedures for hundreds of thousands of their employees. Stung by criticism that many of the drug testing procedures are subject to various issues that plague their accuracy, the drug testing industry welcomes the changes as both a method to provide more accurate drug screens and to outmaneuver those that seek to beat drug tests through a variety of methods that are becoming more popular. Many workers question the real purpose behind these drug tests and are more and more seeking methods that let them pass a drug test even though they may have used drugs or have been exposed by being around people that have used drugs.

One alternative drug testing method involves saliva. These saliva drug tests are expected to become popular as they are thought to be less invasive and less prone to manipulation than urine drug tests. Saliva drug tests are available both in a lab setting and in on-site settings. The specimen collection is a simple procedure. The person being drug tested places a swab into her or his mouth for between two and four minutes to ensure proper absorption of the saliva for the test. The swab looks very much like a household toothbrush but instead of bristles it is outfitted with a soft pad. Since drugs do not store themselves in saliva in the same manner they do in urine, hair or blood, the drug detection times are considerably shorter than these other drug test methods. Saliva drug tests are thought to be best at detecting use of drugs within a period of one or two days. It is thought that saliva drug tests will be perfect for employers that wish to know if there has been very recent drug usage in situations like workplace or other accidents thus providing "evidence" in investigations of on-the-job accidents, allowing the employer to determine not simply whether an employee is involved in drug use but if the alleged usage occurred in a time frame close enough to be the cause. Drugs that are typically detected by saliva drug tests are cannabis-marijuana, -thc, cocaine, opiates, amphetamines, PCP and methamphetamine.

Alternative testing such as saliva drug tests hold great appeal because their accuracy supposedly cannot be foiled with products sold that help people pass and beat drug tests by masking drug residue in urine, The drug testing industry and government officials claim that saliva drug tests are extremely accurate.

However privacy advocates, attorneys and drug testing critics has expressed serious doubts. They point to cases of fireman, paramedics, police officers and others who allege that saliva drug testing is just as prone to false positives as other drug testing methods.

Jay Gruber, an attorney for the National Workrights Institute, an advocacy group for employees notes that “There is quite a lot that would need to be done before saliva drug tests and other types of tests would be sufficient to used for workplace testing,”

The drug screening industry which has produced a very strong lobbying effort has worked in recent years to promote alternative drug tests involving saliva, hair and sweat. They now admit that urine tests were fallible in a number of ways.

Saliva drug testing has only been marketed for workplace drug testing in the past several years. Companies using saliva drug tests include paper manufacturer Georgia-Pacific Corp. Government officials and drug testing industry spokesmen maintain that the new drug tests are not a replacement for urine drug screening but are additional tools in employers’ drug test arsenal.

Source: *Health Blog*

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