

Urine Drug Screens

What Types of Drug Screens Are There?

- Urine – The most common. These tests can be conducted at home and read immediately (limited drugs detectable) or done in an office or lab setting. Average costs range from \$5 for a single panel, at home test up to hundreds of dollars for a thorough lab test.
- Saliva
- Sweat
- Hair
- Blood – The most expensive and least common. These tests are very thorough, invasive, and expensive but can detect virtually any substance desired.

What Do Urine Screens Detect?

Most urine drug screens, at a minimum, test for the NIDA-5, or five common drugs of abuse according to the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA). Additional urine drug screens can test for up to ten or even twelve drugs. The five drugs tested in the NIDA-5 include:

- Cannabinoids (Marijuana, Hashish) – Detectable for up to 12 weeks in a heavy user
- Cocaine – Detectable for up to 21 days in a heavy user
- Amphetamines (Amphetamine, Methamphetamine) – Detectable for up to 48 hours
- Opiates (Heroin, Opium, Codeine, Morphine) – Detectable for up to 48 hours
- Phencyclidine (PCP) – Detectable for up to 8 days

Because common drug usage doesn't always reflect these five classes of drugs only, most urine drug screens can be expanded to test for:

- Synthetic Pain Killers (Hydrocodone, Oxycodone) – Detectable for up to 3 days
- Benzodiazepines (Xanax, Valium, Lorazepam) – Detectable for up to 6 weeks in a heavy user
- Barbiturates (Phenobarbital) – Detectable for up to 6 weeks in a heavy user

How Effective Are Urine Drug Screens?

Tests are very accurate but not 100% accurate. The usual accuracy rate is said to be around 97%. Secondary, more thorough testing methods such as GC/MS can be done on a sample to increase that accuracy rate and rule out false positives.

Can Foods, Other Prescription Medications, or OTC Medications Cause False Positives?

Foods are unlikely to cause false positives. Pseudoephedrine is the most common cause for a false positive for methamphetamine. Other OTC and prescription medications may cause false positive results. Further testing with GC/MS is required to verify a positive result or determine a false positive result.

Sources:

U.S. National Library of Medicine:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003578.htm>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:

<http://www.drugfreeworkplace.gov/Dtesting.html>

UA Tests:

<http://www.uatests.com/drug-testing-information/frequently-asked-questions.php>