

Commercial Services

Workplace Drug & Alcohol Testing

Why Implement Workplace Drug & Alcohol Testing?

Annually, Australia bears the brunt of billions of dollars lost due to drug and alcohol misuse. Companies grapple with a staggering \$2 billion loss each year, stemming from alcohol-related absenteeism and contributing to 11% of workplace accidents and injuries. In their careers, one in 20 Australian workers has admitted to working under the influence of alcohol, while one in 50 has used other drugs on the job¹.

To safeguard workers and mitigate the impact of alcohol and drugs on the work environment, it is crucial to reduce substance use in the workplace. Providing employees with education and wellbeing services can play a pivotal role in achieving this goal. The impairment caused by alcohol and drug use, particularly high-risk use, extends beyond the immediate moment, affecting individuals in the days following.

Whether nursing a hangover, coming down from drugs or recovering from a strenuous weekend, individuals can experience reduced concentration, delayed reactions and impaired decision-making abilities. This compromised performance not only jeopardises the affected individual but also poses risks to their colleagues. Approximately one-third of Australian workers have encountered adverse effects due to a colleague's alcohol use, including accidents, diminished job performance, extra workload to cover for a co-worker and co-workers taking unplanned leave.

To proactively address these issues, implementing a Drug and Alcohol Testing policy emerges as a viable solution. This policy serves as a method to identify employees at risk of impairment and acts as a deterrent, sending a clear message that drug and alcohol abuse is unacceptable within the organisation.

Types of Testing

- Pre-employment
- Random, Targeted or Blanketed
- Post incident or For Cause
- Return to Work

LC/MS Testing

All screening resulting in a non-negative result (instant or laboratory) will automatically proceed to LC/MS testing unless the client specifically requests otherwise. This technique will identify the specific compound present, as well as enabling differential of illicit drugs from prescription and over the counter medications.

As only the LC/MS result will be recognised in legal and para-legal arenas, it is essential that LC/MS be performed on all non-negative results which are unexpected, which may be subject to challenge, or which may trigger disciplinary or other action with the subject.

New and Emerging Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

NPS often mimic the effects of existing illicit substances.

The number of NPS border detections increased by 6% from 2018-19 to 2019-20

Main types of NPS include:

- Synthetic Cannabinoids
- Phenethylamines
- Tryptamines
- Peperazines
- Synthetic Cathinones
- Novel Benzodiazepines

PHE 221 Factsheets 26042023(for pdf format).pdf (aihw.gov.au)²

1: <https://adf.org.au/insights/aod-workplace-safety/#:~:text=One%20in%2020%20Australian%20workers,other%20drugs%20in%20the%20workplace.&text=Alcohol%20use%20contributes%20to%2011,around%20%242%20billion%20each%20year>

2: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/11e9c523-cf2f-4542-9519-c043ed67806c/phe221-factsheets-nps-26042023.pdf.aspx>

Urine vs Oral Fluid

	Urine	Saliva
Drugs detected (screening)	Opiates Amphetamines/Methamphetamines Cannabis Cocaine Benzodiazepines	Opiates Amphetamines/Methamphetamines Cannabis Cocaine Benzodiazepines* Oxycodone
Detection Times	Generally 3-4 days	Generally 3-12 hours
Positives	Longer window of detection which will detect drug use when behavioural risks are significant. Adulterant checks in place for urine i.e. temperature, creatinine, pH, Oxidants and visual inspection. Takes between 4 – 7 minutes to collect and perform instant test. All persons produce urine Less expensive for both screening and confirmation testing One void is sufficient for all testing.	Less invasive. Do not need special collection facilities. Testing for parent drug versus metabolite in Cannabis, thus less historical.
Negative	Special collection facilities required. THC looks at metabolite which can give historical use after quitting use for up to 3 months.	Shorter window of detection which align more closely with more recent use which may fail to detect drug use when behavioural risks are significant. Saliva may be diluted, corrupted or neutralised by brushing teeth/mouth, using mouthwash, smoking.
Standard	AS/NZS 4308:2023	AS/NZS 4760:2019

*Benzodiazepines are not specifically listed in the oral fluid Standard but they are commonly requested and legitimately reported because of an expectation arising from urine testing as well as a requirement in the Australian Government Building Code 2013.

Instant Screening vs Laboratory Screening

Urine		Saliva	
Instant	Laboratory	Instant	Laboratory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results available within 5 minutes • In built creatinine/adulterant checks • Accredited and verified devices • Conforms to AS/NZS 4308 • QC checks performed on kits • Quality assurance program participation • Non-negative resulted sample transferred to a confirmation kit and sent to the laboratory for confirmation – results within 48 BH • Drug detection window typically 3-4 days after last use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative results available within 24 BH • Non-negative samples immediately proceed to confirmation testing – results within 48 BH from collection • Sample collected and transported using strict chain of custody • Additional drugs can be tested • Additional adulteration checks • QC performed • Quality assurance program participation • Drug detection window typically 3-4 days after last use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results available within 5 minutes • Accredited and verified devices • Conforms to AS/NZS 4760 • Inbuilt Quality control • Quality assurance participation • All non-negative samples will need to be collected in a specifically verified sample transfer device e.g. Quantisal and sent to the laboratory – results within 48 BH • Drug detection window typically 3-12 hours after last use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results available within 48 BH • Non-negative result immediately proceed to confirmation – result within 48 BH • Sample collected and transported using strict chain of custody • QC performed • Quality assurance program participation • Drug detection window typically 3-12 hours after last use
Testing services available <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Dedicated Collection Centres ✓ On-site ✓ Available for purchase by customers 		Testing services available <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Limited dedicated collection centres ✓ On-site ✓ Available for purchase by customers 	

Alternative instant devices used and available*

Healius companies

