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DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING CHECK LIST

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Depending upon the specific drug or drugs that a party is suspected of using could impact the method of testing appropriate for the case. Regardless of the method or methods that are determined to be most appropriate, it is important to know that there are different panels of tests that can be administered. Be sure that the panel that you are requesting tests for the drug(s) that are of concern.

A. URINE/HAIR/NAIL PANELS FOR DRUG TESTS

1. 5-Panel

- a) Cocaine
- b) Amphetamines (includes amphetamines, methamphetamines, MDMA)
- c) Opiates (includes morphine, codeine, heroin..... extended panel for other Rx can be requested)
- d) PCP
- e) Marijuana

2. 7- Panel

- a) Cocaine
- b) Amphetamines
- c) Opiates
- d) PCP
- e) Marijuana
- f) Benzodiazepines
- g) Barbiturates

3. 9-Panel

- a) Cocaine
- b) Amphetamines
- c) Opiates
- d) PCP
- e) Marijuana
- f) Benzodiazepines
- g) Barbiturates
- h) Methadone
- i) Propoxyphene

4. 12- Panel

- a) Cocaine
- b) Amphetamines
- c) Opiates
- d) PCP
- e) Marijuana
- f) Benzodiazepines
- g) Barbiturates
- h) Methadone
- i) Propoxyphene
- j) Meperidine
- k) Tramadol
- l) Oxycodone

5. 14-Panel

- a) Cocaine
- b) Amphetamines
- c) Opiates
- d) PCP
- e) Marijuana
- f) Benzodiazepines
- g) Barbiturates
- h) Methadone
- i) Propoxyphene
- j) Meperidine
- k) Tramadol
- l) Oxycodone
- m) Fentanyl
- n) Sufentanil

6. 17-Panel

- a) Cocaine
- b) Amphetamines
- c) Opiates
- d) PCP
- e) Marijuana
- f) Benzodiazepines
- g) Barbiturates
- h) Methadone
- i) Propoxyphene
- j) Meperidine
- k) Tramadol
- l) Oxycodone
- m) Fentanyl
- n) Sufentanil
- o) Ketamine
- p) Buprenorphine
- q) Zolpidem

I. URINE TEST

Depending on the drug, urinalysis testing may not be appropriate. Many factors impact the length of time that certain drugs are detectable in urine. A person's weight can impact the length of time that some drugs can be detected in urine. A person's level of consumption can impact the length of time that some drugs can be detected in urine. For example, a heavier person that uses marijuana on a daily basis for many years can test positive on a urinalysis drug test for 30 to 40 days after stopping drug use. The longest recorded detection time is 77 days. Drugs, other than marijuana, have much smaller detection periods in urine. For example, cocaine stays in the urine up to 3 days and possibly up to 5 days for a chronic/binge episode.

A. WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RECEIVE URINE DRUG TEST RESULTS

1. Once the results are received ALWAYS look at the creatinine levels.
2. If the person being tested is female, a normal creatinine level is 100 to 150 mg/dl.
3. If the person being tested is male, a normal creatinine level is 150 to 200 mg/ml.
4. If the creatinine level of the person being tested, whether male or female is below 20, you should be suspicious of dilution.
5. If the creatinine level is below 20, it usually means an intentional attempt has been made to get the drug below the cutoff level resulting in a false negative.
6. Combining specific gravity and creatinine levels to determine if a urine sample is diluted/invalid only applies to Federal drug testing or if the Judge specifically states in the order that Federal drug testing regulations apply in that particular case.

B. TIPS AND TRICKS

1. A person who has a creatinine level below 20 has likely ingested large amounts of fluid in an attempt to alter the urine drug test results.
2. A few medical conditions exist that may cause a person to have a creatinine level below 20 for a short period of time.
3. Ask the Court for an order that the party being tested not consume large amounts of fluids prior to testing.
4. Any future urine testing should be requested to be random.
5. Any future urine testing should require that the person to be tested to appear at the testing facility within 3 hours for the most accurate test results.
6. Any future urine testing should be in intervals of 30 days with "up to 3 random tests" within the 30 days.

II. HAIR TEST

A. HEAD HAIR

1. Has a longer detection period than urinalysis drug testing.
2. Can detect drug use for up to 90 days.
3. Typically takes from 100 to 150 strands of hair for a hair test sample.
4. The part of the hair that is tested is 1.5 inches of hair closest to the scalp.
5. Marijuana is difficult, but not impossible, to detect in a hair test.
6. The test will not detect drugs consumed within approximately the two weeks prior to when the nail sample is collected.
7. It is NOT a "hair follicle test." We test only the hair strand and never the follicle.

B. BODY HAIR

1. Has a longer detection period than urinalysis drug testing and head hair testing.
2. Can detect drug use for 7 to 12 months.

3. Drugs can be detected for a longer time period in body hair than head hair because body hair grows for 7 to 12 months, becomes dormant and then falls out several months later.
4. The test will not detect drugs consumed within approximately the two to three weeks prior to when the sample is collected.
5. Again, it is NOT a “hair follicle test.”

C. TIPS AND TRICKS

1. Ask the Court for an injunction early in the case to prevent the party from cutting, coloring or bleaching the body or head hair. These could impact the levels of drug(s) detected.
2. Any future testing should be done in 90 day intervals.
3. There are shampoos and other products on the market that are proven to reduce the level of drugs detected in hair drug tests.
4. If the use of shampoos or other products are suspected, another method of testing is recommended such as nails.

III. NAIL TESTING

A. FINGERNAIL

1. The person being testing must have sufficient nail length for the test to be completed.
2. All acrylic nails and fingernail polish must be removed from the nails prior to testing.
3. Fingernail testing is done by clipping off the white end of the fingernail.
4. Scraping the surface of the nail to obtain a sample for testing is no longer recommended or preferred plus a razor blade is a medical device, technically putting the test under HIPAA, instead of forensics.
5. Fingernail testing has a longer detection period than urinalysis testing.
6. Drugs can be detected in fingernails for approximately 3 to 5 months.
7. If a person tests positive on a fingernail test, additional testing should be conducted every 90 days to monitor the levels.
8. If a person has stopped using the drug, the level of the drug being detected should be decreasing with each additional test until the date has passed the window of detection. At that time it should be negative.
9. If the level increases in subsequent tests, then the drug is likely still being consumed.
10. Fingernail testing will not detect drugs consumed within approximately the two weeks prior to when the nail sample is collected.

B. TOENAIL

1. The person being testing must have sufficient nail length for the test to be completed.
2. All acrylic nails and fingernail polish must be removed from the nails prior to testing.
3. Toenails grow approximately 4 times slower than fingernails, so you will capture drug use farther back in time than with fingernail testing.
4. Toenail testing is done by clipping the end of the nail.
5. Toenail testing has a longer detection period than urinalysis, head hair and fingernail testing.
6. Drugs can be detected in toenails for approximately 8 to 12 months.
7. If a person tests positive on a toenail test, additional testing should be conducted every 90 days to monitor the levels.
8. If a person has stopped using, the level of the drug being detected in toenails should be decreasing with each additional test until the date has passed the window of detection. At that time it should be negative.
9. If the level increases in subsequent tests, then the drug is likely still being consumed.
10. Toenail testing will not detect drugs consumed within approximately the two to three weeks prior to when the nail sample is collected.

C. TIPS AND TRICKS

1. If fingernail or toenail testing will be requested, seek an order from the Court that the person being testing not cut their nails or have acrylic or other substances placed on the nails.
2. If acrylic nails or other substances are on the nails, seek an order from the Court that the substance be removed immediately and not re-applied until all testing has been completed.
3. It is also recommended to seek that the Court take judicial notice or a record of the length of the fingernails or toenails, in open court, at the hearing where the testing is being sought.
4. Finger or toenail testing is the preferred type of sample over hair when deciding which test to choose since hair results can be manipulated and altered resulting in a false negative test for a drug user.

IV. ALCOHOL TESTING

Alcohol is eliminated from the body at a rate of approximately one drink per hour. Therefore, the detection of alcohol is limited to a number of hours when testing by blood or the old urine alcohol test. EtG is a direct metabolite of consumed ethyl alcohol and its detection in urine is highly specific. EtG can be tested by urine, hair and nails.

A. ETG URINALYSIS TESTING

1. EtG testing in urine, commonly known as the 80-hour test, can only detect alcohol consumption based on the amount of alcohol consumed. Chronic consumption of alcohol can be detected for up to 3 to 5 days. Consumption of 3 drinks can on be detected for approximately 20 hours.
2. The volume of alcohol consumed and the length of time between each drink impacts the numbers of hours that an EtG test can detect alcohol consumption.
3. Detects recent alcohol consumption accurately and for a longer period of time than the old urine test.
4. EtG is now the standard alcohol test when using urine.
5. There are no false positives.
6. EtG is not found in non-drinkers.
7. It is ideal for zero tolerance and abstinence situations.
8. EtG is not produced as a result of fermentation.

B. HAIR & NAILS

1. EtG alcohol testing is performed in hair and nails.
2. The window of detection is approximately 3 months for head or body hair and finger or toe nails.
3. One limitation is that hair exposed to chemicals such as pool water containing chlorine can reduce the level of EtG by approximately 20% after each time.
4. Stronger chemicals applied to the hair can completely destroy the EtG, resulting in a false negative.
5. It is recommended that only nails be used to test for EtG and not hair.
6. A positive EtG in hair or nails results from chronic/binge episodes during the 3 month window of detection.

C. PEth BLOOD ALCOHOL

1. Phosphatidylethanol (PEth) is a direct alcohol biomarker.
2. The window of detection is up to 2-3 weeks.
3. Five blood spots collected from the fingertip.
4. A positive is from consuming alcohol chronically or from binge drinking.
5. Donor cannot alter test results.