

Frequently Asked Questions about Hair Drug Testing

1. What is Hair Drug Testing?

Hair growth is fed by the bloodstream, thus, the ingestion of drugs of abuse is revealed by analyzing a small sample of hair. Hair drug tests analyze for the parent drugs and their metabolites inside the hair shaft (follicle). Metabolites are only produced by the body and cannot be an environmental contaminant. Since drug molecules are embedded inside the hair shaft, hair drug testing results cannot be altered with shampoos, dyes, bleaches or other external contaminants/chemicals.

2. What drugs are included in a standard Hair Drug Test?

The standard panel includes: cocaine, marijuana, opiates (codeine, morphine, 6-monoacetylmorphine {heroin}), amphetamines (methamphetamine, MDMA {ecstasy}, MDA, and phencyclidine (PCP). Extended opiates panel adds hydrocodone, hydromorphone, oxycodone, and oxycodone. **Testing for other drugs of abuse is available.**

3. What time period does a Hair Drug Test cover?

Head hair covers approximately the last 90 days. The hair sample is cut as close to the root end as possible and the **most recent 1.5 inches** are tested. Longer time periods can be tested for – keep in mind that every 1.5 inches of head hair equals approximately 90 days (i.e. 3 inches = approx. 180 days). This timeframe is an approximation only since an individual's actual hair growth rate may vary from the average. Body hair grows much slower than head hair and a test done on body hair will be reported as drug usage during approximately a 6 month to one year timeframe.

4. How much hair is needed?

A standard screen requires approximately 90 to 120 strands of hair (usually small samples will be obtained from several areas).

5. How does Hair Drug Testing compare to urine drug testing?

- Hair offers a wider window of detection. Many drugs are rapidly excreted and usually undetectable in urine a short period of time, or days, after use.
- Inability to tamper with the test. At this time, there are no known adulterants to hair drug testing.

6. How soon after use can a drug be detected in the hair?

It takes approximately 5-10 days from the time of drug use for the hair containing drug to grow above the scalp.

7. Can tests be run on people with little or no hair?

Yes, body hair can be used (chest, armpit, extremities) as a substitute for head hair.

8. Can there be false positive results?

To eliminate the possibility of reporting false positives, all initial positive screens are confirmed by GC/MS (gas chromatography mass spectrometry) and confirms both parent and metabolites (bi-product) of drug usage.