

Alcohol and substance dependence are among the major challenges facing South African businesses. This chemical dependence is adversely affecting employees in organisations and impacting on their productivity.

Individuals suspected of substance dependence may present with a variety of symptoms ranging from mild mood changes to coma. In the case of alcohol the effects may range from subclinical to excitement, confusion, stupor and coma. These levels correspond to an increasing level of blood alcohol.

Testing for alcohol and drugs of abuse is therefore essential for the management of such individuals. Lancet believes we can make a contribution to the workplace by providing pathology laboratory testing of the highest standard for alcohol and drug abuse.

There are currently a number of point-of-care tests available for drugs of abuse screening which produces a quicker turnaround time on the result. Lancet Laboratories has evaluated a few of these point-of-care tests. We are now able to offer a much faster result using one such test, the Noble Cup. The chosen device uses monoclonal antibodies to detect a range of specific drugs which include Cocaine, Cannabis, Methamphetamines, Amphetamines, Opiates, Oxycodone, Propoxyphene, Benzodiazepines, Barbiturates and Ecstasy (MDMA).

The common date rape drug Rohypnol (flunitrazepam or roofies) will also be detectable using the Noble Cup, but samples must be sent in within 24 hrs of suspected dosing. Other common drugs like ketamine and gamma-hydroxy-butyrate (GBH) are not detected.

Below is a list of drugs, their street name and window of detection.

| Drug | Street Name | Window of Detection |
|---|---|--|
| Cocaine | Coke, Crack, Snow | 2-3 days, max 22 days |
| Methamphetamines | Crank, Crystal Meth, Speed, Ice, Tik | 60 hrs, max 6 days |
| Cannabis | Grass, Herb, Pot, Weed | 1-4 days (Occasional), up to 12 days (Moderate), 22 days (Chronic Use) |
| Amphetamines | Crosses, Hearts | 1-3 Day's max 9 days |
| Opiates | Dover's Powder, Paregoric | 10 hrs - 6 days, max 10 days |
| Oxycodone (naloxone, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, oxymorphone) | Oxy | 1-2 Days |
| Propoxyphene | Darvon, Pinks, Footballs | 6 Hrs - 2 Days |
| Benzodiazepines | Tranks, Xanax | 3-7 Days, Chronic: 4-6 Weeks |
| Barbiturates | Barbs | 2 Day's (Short Acting) 2-3 Weeks (Long Acting) |
| Ecstasy (MDMA) | E, XTC, Love Drug, Hug Drug, Lovers Speed | 1-3 Day's |

The testing is done on urine and the drugs measured are either the parent drug or a metabolite. The appearance of the drug in urine, and the window of detection are dependent on the pharmacokinetics of the drug, the dose taken and whether the use is occasional, regular or chronic.

This method of testing can be used in the work place as a pre-employment test, or as part of routine testing. This form of testing is for screening purposes only. Confirmation tests are available and if required will be done using a different method of testing. Requesting medical personnel will need to specify if confirmation tests are required for any positive results.

It should be noted that prescription drugs, such as Myprodol will test positive for opiates due to the codeine in the formulation. Again, the confirmation tests will be able to differentiate between codeine containing opiates and other habit forming opiates like heroin.

For medico-legal purposes, informed consent from the individual is required. In addition, proper procedures relating to chain of custody (signed and sealed specimen etc) must be adhered to.

For the chain of custody details, detection limits on the drugs or any other queries please contact our **Toxicology Laboratory: Tel: (011) 358 0719**

Alcohol testing is available as a blood test and a result can be obtained within 24 hours.

Dr Jacques de Greef is available by appointment to conduct information sessions at your company and assist with substance abuse assessments for successful reintegration into the work environment as part of your organisation's Employee Assistance Programme.

Please call 011 242 7373 for an appointment.