

# Oral fluid workplace drug testing: What the new federal guidelines mean for you

New guidelines issued by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) permit oral fluid (saliva) drug testing in federally regulated workplaces. This is the first time in nearly 30 years that SAMHSA is supporting an alternative to urine testing. Why is this exciting news for the industry? Read on to find out.

## What do the new guidelines say about oral fluid testing?

For years only urine testing was allowed under the SAMHSA/Department of Transportation (DOT)/Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) guidelines. Laboratory-based oral fluid drug testing will become a viable option for SAMHSA regulated employees, once the implementation period is complete. This means federally regulated employers will soon be able to take advantage of the many benefits laboratory-based oral fluid drug testing has provided to non-regulated employers for nearly 20 years. It is important to note that the new oral fluid guidelines do not include the use of instant or rapid oral fluid drug testing products.

## Why are these new guidelines so significant?

The rate of workforce drug positivity hit a 14-year high in 2018 (Quest Diagnostics, 2019). With the opioid epidemic plaguing many cities and towns—along with the legalization of marijuana in some states—reliable workplace drug testing is more essential than ever.

The inclusion of oral fluid drug testing in the SAMHSA guidelines presents employers with the ability to conveniently perform collections while maintaining the accuracy of a laboratory-based test. According to the 2019 Quest Index, overall positivity rates in the general workforce are 10.2% for oral fluid, compared to 5.1% for urine.

## What is oral fluid drug testing?

Oral fluid drug testing involves collecting an oral fluid sample from an individual and analyzing it for the presence or absence of drugs. Collection is typically performed by placing an absorbent pad in a subject's mouth to collect an adequate quantity of sample for testing. The sample is placed into a vial containing a preservative, sealed under chain of custody protocol, and then sent to a laboratory for screening and confirmation testing of any non-negative samples.



**“Oral fluid should substantially lessen the risk of specimen substitution and adulteration...”**  
SAMHSA



**“Time savings from 1-3 hours per test”**  
SAMHSA



OraSure Technologies

# The benefits of oral fluid testing vs. urine testing

## The key advantages of oral fluid drug testing include:

- **Better recent-use detection** – deal with on the job risks and concerns related to marijuana more effectively.
- **Easy to administer** – collect samples anytime, anywhere reducing costs.
- **Faster processing** – improve productivity with less time away from work than with urine collection.
- **Virtually tamper-proof and cannot be diluted** – reduce risk of missing positives, increasing safety in the workplace.
- **Accurate and legally defensible** – have confidence in your results.
- **Eliminates privacy and gender issues** – improve attitudes about testing and streamlines collection.

## How to make the switch

If you are a non-regulated employer, or have a portion of non-regulated employees, there is nothing to wait for—you can switch now. Simply consult with your provider on how to make laboratory-based oral fluid drug testing part of your policy/program. If your provider or laboratory does not currently offer oral fluid testing as a service, just let us know and we will help you.

If you are a regulated employer that follows SAMHSA guidelines, it is important to learn about these changes, what the implementation period will be and begin to explore the potential benefits to your business. This includes selection of oral fluid testing products and finding an oral fluid SAMHSA-certified laboratory.

OraSure can help with these steps and answer any questions you may have about the new oral fluid guidelines.

**To learn more, contact us at  
1-610-419-7657 or [chooseintercept@orasure.com](mailto:chooseintercept@orasure.com).**



## About OraSure

OraSure Technologies is a leader in the development, manufacture and distribution of oral fluid diagnostic and collection devices and other technologies designed to detect or diagnose critical medical conditions. These products include oral fluid testing solutions for drugs of abuse testing, including Intercept® Oral Fluid Drug Testing System and Q.E.D.® Saliva Alcohol Test. [www.orasure.com](http://www.orasure.com).

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