

# GETTING RESULTS



BY JACKIE PIRONE

Instant testing is an efficient way to clear the approximate 96% of individuals testing negative

In a world of instant gratification, our approach to the way we do things has changed with the times. Texting and email are faster than mailing an envelope, and binge watching an entire season of a show sure beats waiting week after week for new episodes. In the world of drug testing, instant testing has made inroads into a once laboratory dominated field.

Instant testing, also known as point-of-care (POC) testing, rapid result testing or on-site testing, offers a unique drug testing solution compared to lab-based drug testing. Instead of having to send employees and applicants to an off-site collection facility, ship specimens to a lab, and wait to receive test results, instant testing occurs onsite and provides an immediate screening result. This means negative employees can go back to work right away, or in the case of a potential new hires, there is no delay between testing and starting work.

## How does instant testing work?

To understand instant testing, first let's take a quick look at lab-based testing. For those employers who conduct lab-based testing, the time it takes to receive the result is something that needs to be considered. Once the sample is collected, it is then transported to the lab where the testing takes place. Negative results are available in about 24 hours. If the result is non-negative, the sample needs to go for confirmatory testing which takes another 24 to 72 hours.

With instant testing, employers can screen employees on-site and obtain a screening result in minutes. Negative employees can immediately return to/start work – no waiting for the lab results. Non-negative samples will need confirmatory testing, which can be conducted by a lab and verified by a medical review officer.

The goal of a screening test is to rule out the negative results to get people on the job quickly. With a 4.4% drug positivity rate, instant testing is an efficient way to clear the approximate 96% of individuals testing negative in about 10 minutes per test.<sup>1</sup>

## Advantages of instant testing

Available for both urine and oral fluid drug testing, instant testing provides solutions for various drug testing scenarios, from pre-employment to post-accident. Advantages of instant testing include:

- **Ease of use**—Instant testing is easy to administer and interpret.
- **Speed to result**—Once the sample is collected, result is given within minutes meaning negative employees can return to work immediately.
- **Cost savings**—Lab-based samples are often collected off-site. Unless an employer owns the collection facility or laboratory, they have to pay each person involved with the process. In most states this includes paying employees during collection time. With instant testing, the amount of time paid to employees during collection goes down from hours per individual to minutes.

*This information is provided for educational purposes only. Reader retains full responsibility for the use of the information contained herein.*

# ALL ABOUT INSTANT TESTING



- **Lower adulteration attempts with the element of surprise**—Instant testing makes it easy for employers to conduct random drug and alcohol testing on-site right then and there; meaning employees don't have time to prepare or to attempt cheating. With oral fluid samples, you can easily observe the collection.
- **No travel time**—All specimen collections can be done on-site at the workplace or work site.
- **Control the experience**—With off-site testing, an employer needs to coordinate with supervisors, managers, HR, collection facilities, laboratories, and MROs all before setting a date to conduct testing. When drug testing is performed on-site, an employer can cut out the second half of the equation and simply tell supervisors, managers, or HR that day that drug testing will occur, having complete control over when and where testing occurs.

## INSTANT TESTING IS WORTH CONSIDERING WHEN YOU:

- Need a result quickly.
- Don't want to deal with a collection site.
- Want to save time and money by doing your own collection.
- Want to get employees to work quickly.

## Considerations

Before deciding to conduct instant testing at your institution please consider that use is not allowed in all states. California, Kansas, Nevada, and New York have laboratory licensing laws that indirectly prohibit instant testing by requiring all testing take place in a laboratory. Minnesota, Puerto Rico, and Vermont have mandatory laws that outright prohibit it. Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Ohio prohibit instant testing but only as part of their voluntary drug testing laws. Therefore, if an employer values the advantages of instant testing over the advantages offered by these states' voluntary programs, they are not prohibited from using it. Finally, Maryland, North Carolina, and Tennessee limit instant testing to pre-employment circumstances.

Additionally, not all instant testing devices are equal and not all are FDA cleared. It is important to conduct thorough due diligence to ensure that the device being used produces expected results, has a history of reliability, and the manufacturer will stand by the product if a result is challenged based on a device's ability to produce accurate results. Study a device's product insert, which will contain performance claims, relevant drug cutoffs and ensure such claims are accurate. The manufacturer or product representative can provide more details.

## Conclusion

Instant testing has a place in different testing environments. It is designed for speed and ease of use, is an excellent option for screening testing and it makes it harder for employees to cheat. No longer does drug testing need to be a 24–72 hour process. When done right, instant drug testing programs can help companies achieve their drug testing objectives in a fast and cost-effective manner.

1. Quest Diagnostics Index 2019