



TESTING FOR CANNABIS: WHICH SPECIMEN IS BEST?

KATHERINE MILLER

Parent drug is more likely to correlate with recent-use detection than a metabolite.

The environment around workplace testing for cannabis is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate. States like Delaware place nearly no restrictions on employers, while states like California limit employers to only certain specimens, and states like New York prohibit nearly all testing. It is essential for employers to not only be aware of complicated state laws and city ordinances, but also have knowledge of the best test specimen to fit their needs when testing for cannabis use.

How to continue testing for cannabis, particularly in states that limit testing capabilities

It is becoming more common for states to severely limit an employer's abilities when it comes to workplace cannabis testing, whether it be for recreational or medical purposes. California, for example, will prohibit employers from discriminating against off-duty cannabis use or taking action based on test findings that indicate non-psychoactive cannabis metabolites as of 2024. What does this mean for employers? Some may think that this will prohibit testing for cannabis entirely; however, it is important that employers are aware of the entirety of the legislation passed, not just the "punchy" parts.

Most important for employers to note is the law permits them to discriminate in hiring, terms or conditions of employment, or penalize an individual based on a "scientifically valid" pre-employment test conducted using a method that does not screen for non-psychoactive cannabis metabolites. Using a testing method that identifies the presence of the parent drug THC in bodily fluids rather than the metabolite(s) is essential in this circumstance.

Employers nationwide should be looking for a test specimen that detects parent drug rather than metabolites. Not only is this essential in some states, but it is also best practice as parent drug



BREATH



BLOOD



ORAL FLUID



URINE



HAIR

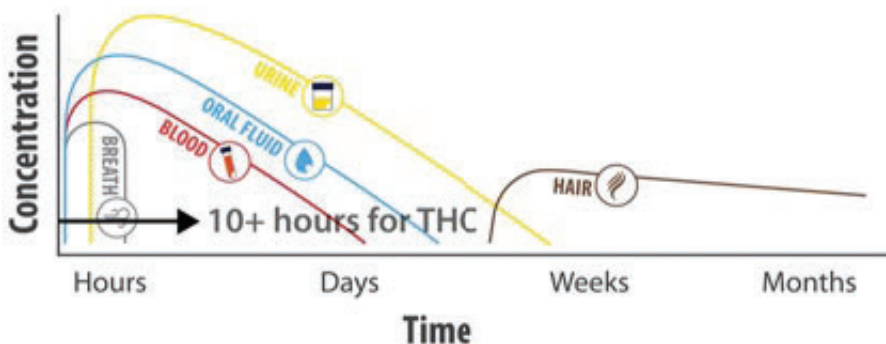
is more likely to correlate with recent-use detection than a metabolite that can remain in the body for days or even weeks post-use. Unlike urine, oral fluid measures the parent drug, allowing employers most states to continue using it for workplace drug testing in light of recent updates to cannabis laws. It is likely that we will see more states moving toward limiting workplace testing to only specimens that detect parent drug in the near future.

In addition to choosing a specimen that detects the parent drug, such as oral fluid, it is essential to ensure that your testing methodologies comply with applicable state laws and federal regulations. Look for a specimen that has a track record of being legally defensible in addition to one that is generally accepted and well-known.

What to look for when testing for cannabis?

In addition to looking for a specimen that detects the parent drug, ensure that the specimen you choose detects only recent use. Hair, for example, detects the parent drug, but doesn't detect recent use. Recent-use detection, meaning the detection of drugs that have been used in the past minutes to hours, is essential in cannabis detection as cannabis metabolites can stay in the user's system for days and up to weeks.

Oral fluid is the only specimen that not only detects recent use, but also covers the entire window of impairment (meaning the period post-ingestion where the individual experiences impairing effects) for cannabis. Breath and blood, for example, don't cover the entire window of impairment, although they do focus on recent use. Urine and hair far outlast the window of impairment and focus on historic use (meaning use that has happened within days to weeks).



Oral fluid is the only specimen that detects the parent drug, covers the entire window of impairment for THC, and also only detects recent use. Oral fluid is legal in nearly all 50 states and is the only test specimen that fits the needs of more restrictive testing laws.

Oral fluid is the way of the future

As more states follow California's lead, it will become essential for employers to use a test specimen that detects the parent drug, focuses on recent use, and covers the entire window of impairment for cannabis. Oral fluid is the only specimen that meets all of those needs and more.



Want to talk to someone about switching to oral fluid? Contact OraSure!

1-800-672-7873