

Saliva drug testing solutions a convenient alternative

 By [Rhys Evans](#)

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Drug abuse is a growing problem in South Africa, and organisations need to be aware of the consequences on their workforce. A significant part of curbing this issue lies in education on the negative effects of drugs, however, organisations also need to have strict no drug policies in the workplace.

These policies need to be enforced, which requires drug testing. However, traditional urine testing has often proved challenging, particularly when it comes to female employees. This has often led to lax testing policies and procedures in organisations, contributing to the rising issue.

Saliva drug test solutions offer a safe and convenient alternative for both male and female employees and their employers to enforce drug abuse policies and prevent the harmful consequences of this social challenge.

Aside from contravening the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), which requires a zero tolerance stance on substance abuse in the workplace, drug use can also negatively impact both an organisation and its employees.

Various obstacles

From reduced productivity and increased absenteeism to erratic behaviour and danger to other workers, the consequences of drug use for employers are clear. For the employees themselves, particularly among women, drug abuse affects the user, their families and their entire community.

Drug testing is an important component of the solution for these challenges in the workplace. However, with traditional methods there have been a number of obstacles, which has resulted in poor uptake of effective testing in many organisations.

When it comes to selecting the drug testing equipment, there are a number of different solutions available, divided into two main categories of urine testing and saliva testing. Urine tests are the most commonly known and understood, but they present a number of issues when it comes to testing women.

Urine testing, as the name implies, requires a urine sample. This means that a female safety officer needs to accompany the woman being tested to the bathroom and watch them urinate to ensure the sample is not tampered with. Not only is this degrading for the dignity of the employee in question, but it is also often embarrassing as it is difficult to get the sample into the cup without messing or spilling.

Challenging method

For the organisation this method is also challenging, as it requires a private bathroom, which is not always possible, especially in industries such as mining and construction. In addition, since male employees must be tested by males, and females by females, it requires at least two safety officers to be on staff, which may not be cost effective.

Saliva drug testing solutions provide a simple and convenient alternative that circumvents all of these issues and complaints. Saliva testing uses a swab that is simply held in the mouth for a certain period of time, and so can be accomplished anywhere. Results are produced in a matter of minutes, and the tests can be used to screen for a panel of five common illegal substances including heroin, cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamines.

There are no privacy concerns with such testing, and a male or female tester can test both male and female subjects. One thing to bear in mind, however, is that some saliva testing units can be very large and heavy and are not particularly portable. Organisations need to ensure they select a compact and easy to use system if portability is a priority.

Curbing the rising drug problem is the responsibility of every organisation, and effective drug testing policies are an essential part in achieving this. With appropriate drug testing technology such as saliva testing, both employees and employers can take steps to prevent the many problematic consequences of drug abuse. These solutions are highly convenient and enable practically any organisation to implement effective drug testing processes.

ABOUT RHYS EVANS

- Rhys Evans is the Director of ALCO-Safe, suppliers of superior drug and alcohol testing equipment and accessories throughout Africa
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