



## Drug Testing Frequently Asked Questions

Chances are that if you accept a job offer in Florida, your offer will be contingent on your passing a drug screen. 70 – 80% of Florida companies screen applicants for drugs, and Florida has some of the strongest employer incentives in the country to maintain a drug-free workplace, according to LindaRose Griffin, president of Medical Express Corporation. Medical Express Corporation is a local firm that outsources drug screening, physicals and background checks for companies across the United States. Griffin has 13 years of experience in the field, and says she’s seen significant changes over the past few years.

“Many, many companies are testing now,” she says, and it’s about more than just doing the right thing. Businesses understand that a drug-free workplace is good for the bottom line. Florida gives companies a 5% discount on their Workers Comp insurance rates, and that can really add up for a large employer.” According to Griffin, most companies do a “5-panel” screen on applicants, testing for the presence of amphetamines, cocaine metabolites, marijuana metabolites, opiates (which includes drugs such as codeine and heroine), and PCP (phencyclidine.) Testing for metabolites means that the test reveals the presence of the substances the body produces after processing marijuana and cocaine. That eliminates the possibility that you will test positive for marijuana from inhaling second hand smoke, for example. You must have ingested enough of the drug for your body to have processed it.

Here are some answers to commonly asked questions about drug testing.

**Who has access to my results?** Your results are sent from the lab to the HR department that requested the test. Companies who are Florida Drug Free workplaces or that are covered by the US Department of Transportation regulations must use a medical review officer (a licensed M.D.) to review the results and resolve any test issues. Generally, the recruiter will be informed that you tested negative or positive (and for which substance.) The drug screen results should be filed separately from your application, although company policies may vary.

**What are my chances of having a ‘false positive’ drug test?** According to experts in the industry, false positives are almost impossible with proper collection procedures. The test technology is very advanced, according to Griffin, and the fail rate for applicants has dropped dramatically over the past few years. Although companies like Medical Express Corporation don’t receive the results directly (they go straight from the lab to the medical review officer and then to the recruiter) she notes that recruiters report that only 5 – 6% of applicants that are screened fail a drug test, down from more than 10% five years ago. She attributes the change to education and the fact that so many employers take drug

screening seriously. “Most applicants don’t want to risk their career over recreational drug use,” she says.

**Will prescription drugs show up in my drug test?** Some prescriptions may fall into the categories that are screened (such as opiates) and may show up as positive tests. That is why a doctor reviews the tests; you’ll get a call if there is a question about prescription drugs. If the prescription is yours (and you can prove it) you should be reported as negative, and the recruiter will never hear anything about the results, except that you passed. If you are taking drugs that were not prescribed to you, it’s still considered a positive drug test, and you will not pass the screen. Different states and employers have different guidelines on this issue. The safest bet is to never take a drug that was not prescribed for you – not even your spouse’s.

**If I feel the results of my test were wrong, can I ask for another test?** No. If it is allowed, it’s a serious error in policy. Griffin says that a well-designed program will never allow an employee or applicant to be tested again. The technology is so accurate that it’s a waste of time. In some cases, an applicant or employee may request to have the same specimen re-tested at their own expense at another certified lab. That would cost about \$150.00 of their own money, and Griffin says it’s a rare occurrence.

**When can an employer test me on the job?** Since drug testing on the job is a policy issue, employers can institute employee testing at any time after a reasonable notice period (usually 60 days.) Most companies do random tests periodically, but they will often test an employee immediately after a workplace accident. If you are found to have drugs in your system after a company accident or injury, you may lose all your worker’s comp benefits and be terminated. Your health insurance coverage for treating injuries may also be impacted, as will your unemployment benefits. It’s simply not worth the risk

Employers have realized that a drug-free workplace is a better place for everyone to work. Drug-free policies help prevent injuries, accidents, and can lower incidences of theft. They also protect the company against lawsuits. More and more companies will be testing applicants and employees, and the result will be a better and safer place for you to work.

Visit any of our Career Centers to get one-on-one assistance on dealing with difficult questions during the job interview.