

Drug and Alcohol Testing Information

PLEASE READ THE INFORMATION BELOW CAREFULLY

Drug Testing from Hair Samples

- Sample analysis will be undertaken at our UK based laboratory, which is accredited to ISO/IEC 17025:2005 by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) for a wide range of drugs and drug metabolites. More information can be found in our technical specification.
- The average growth rate of hair is 1cm per month and so every 1cm of hair is equivalent to approximately one month of growth, results will be reported accordingly depending on the length of hair sampled. If you have requested an overview we will analyse the hair sample in 3cm sections (we can also test 1–2cm sections if required) and report on the presence of drug/s or drug metabolite/s for the equivalent hair growth time period. For example, in a three month period, there will be one result covering the entire time period. If you have requested a month by month analysis, we will test the sample in 1cm sections and report on the presence of drug/s or drug metabolite/s in each section of hair tested. For example, in a three month period, there will be three results, one for each month.
- We are only able to carry out an overview on body hair samples and the time period the test covers will be more approximate due to the nature of body hair growth.
- If we have provided a quote for analysis which later cannot be undertaken following sample assessment at the laboratory, we will aim to carry out the analysis for the time period the sample allows. For example, if three month analysis (3cm) is requested but only 2cm of hair is available.
- On occasions, a sample will not be suitable for testing, in which case we would contact you and provide you with options of how to proceed. For example, sectional analysis may have been requested but due to hair condition overview analysis may be the only option available. Chemical treatments used on hair can affect the levels of drugs detected. It is important to declare at the time of hair sampling, any recent hair treatments and also any prescribed medications being taken.

Alcohol Testing from Hair Samples

- We test for two specific alcohol markers – ethyl glucuronide (EtG) and fatty acid ethyl esters (FAEE). The sample analysis will be undertaken at our UK based laboratory, which is accredited to ISO/IEC 17025:2005 by UKAS.
- In order to directly compare the results of our analysis to the Consensus of The Society of Hair Testing (SoHT), the donor's head hair must measure at least 3cm. Please ensure the donor has sufficient hair, prior to the sample collection. Samples between 1–3cm in length can be analysed with consent, however, the results will not be directly comparable to the Consensus of the SoHT and this will be clearly stated in the Expert Witness Report (if you have requested one). If you choose not to proceed, you will still be liable for any previously agreed sample collection fee. If we receive a sample measuring less than 1cm in length it will not be possible to conduct the analysis. Again, you would still be liable for any previously agreed sample collection fee.
- Normal hygiene practices such as shampooing can reduce levels of EtG and FAEE. The use of alcohol containing products on the hair can contribute to the level of FAEE detected. Chemical treatments such as dyeing or bleaching may result in lower levels of FAEE and EtG being detected.
- It is recommended that samples covering a three month period (3cm) should be tested for both EtG and FAEE. In hair lengths of greater than 3cm, EtG is more likely to have been removed by washing. However, a sample length of 6cm is still in line with the Consensus of the SoHT guidelines for testing but interpretation of such results is more complex. If required, we can analyse chest hair samples for EtG and FAEE.

Turnaround Times

- We understand that the results of analyses are often vital in court proceedings and we will endeavour to meet any deadlines set by the court. Any such deadlines should be stated at the point of test request. Results will be e-mailed to the ordering party.

The turnaround times for hair testing are as follows:

- Drugs – 5 working days (for an expedited service only for the following drug groups: amphetamines, methamphetamines, benzodiazepines, methadone, cannabis, mephedrone, cocaine, opiates and ketamine only)
- Drugs – 10 working days (standard service and for any non-standard drug groups)

Location of copies: (1) Master File (2) Laboratory (3) NorthGene Office

- Alcohol – 10 working days
- The turnaround time for blood testing results is 10 working days.
- Turnaround times begin once the sample has been received into the laboratory. If the sample is received into the laboratory after 11am, then the turnaround time is calculated from the following working day.
- In some cases, we require further information about a sample before processing it. If this is the case, our Customer Services Team will endeavour to contact you within 24 hours to request the necessary details. The turnaround time will be on hold until the sample analysis can commence.

Hair Testing Result

Results will be sent in one of two formats, either an Expert Witness Report or a Certificate of Analysis (CofA).

Expert Witness Report

We would highly recommend using this service for any results which are used in the Family Court. This is a written interpretive statement of the test results and will include the interpretation of drugs or drug metabolites present below cut-off levels.

Certificate of Analysis (CofA)

This will provide a statement including numerical results for the drugs or drug metabolites detected above cut-off levels. A result of 'not detected' will be reported for the absence of drugs or drug metabolites or for the presence of drugs or drug metabolites present below cut-off levels. If you have opted for a CofA and require an Expert Report at a later date, we are able to write a report for an extra cost at the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) codified rate of £108+VAT per hour.

Blood Tests - Liver Function Test (LFT) and Carbohydrate Transferrin (CDT) Test

- A Liver Function Test (LFT) measures various chemicals in the blood which are produced by the liver. An abnormal result indicates a problem with the liver, and can reflect damage caused by excessive alcohol use. Changing levels can also be caused by other medical problems outside of the liver and some medications. Normal liver function results do not always exclude liver disease or damage.
- A Carbohydrate Deficient Transferrin (CDT) looks at transferrin, a protein which transports iron around the body and which is affected by drinking alcohol. The effect takes the form of a deficiency of carbohydrate molecules within the protein. The level of deficiency is reported as a percentage (%). A reading of over 1.5% would be

considered positive and would be consistent with an increased alcohol intake of longer than two to four weeks.

- A LFT can highlight liver damage caused by excessive alcohol consumption, whilst a CDT offers higher specificity related to recent heavy alcohol consumption.
- LFT and CDT tests are performed by a third party who hold Clinical Pathology Accreditation and have been deemed compliant with 'Standards for the Medical Laboratory.

Blood Test Results – Clinic Interpretation

- The blood test results will be in the form of a Certificate of Analysis (CofA), which indicates if the results are within the normal expected range for the tests carried out.
- If you require a more detailed interpretation of blood test results we recommend that you request a clinical interpretation.
- A clinical interpretation when used alongside hair alcohol marker testing is used to assess chronic excessive alcohol consumption and will contribute to understanding whether or not alcohol is an issue in care proceedings.

Sample Collection

If you have chosen to use our sample collection service, please consider the following information carefully:

To ensure that our tests are robust and can stand up to challenges in court, the entire process from sample collection through to results reporting needs to conform to a visible, traceable chain of custody. The testing laboratory has an experienced UK wide network of trained sample collectors who are able to offer a secure and convenient service. This safeguards the integrity of the process – keeping it independent of a legal team or organisation requesting the sample and prevents court delays resulting from errors in sample collection.

Identification

The Donor will be required to present a form of photo identification, such as a passport, photo driving license or student card. Please note that utility bills or bank statements are not acceptable forms of ID. In circumstances where the Donor does not possess acceptable ID, we will take a photograph of the Donor and attach it to their results. If we are conducting a sample collection at a business premises, any employee at the firm who knows the Donor can carry out the identification. When making this decision, please be mindful of any possible objections the opposing party may make as this could hinder your case at a later stage.

Witness

Location of copies: (1) Master File (2) Laboratory (3) NorthGene Office

NorthGene does not require a Witness at the collection, however if you would like a Witness present, please provide one and we will record this on the Chain of Custody Form.

Location

Standard sample collections will take place at a business premises. Alternatively, you can use our clinic or arrange a sample collection at the Donor's home. If a home sample collection is required, please contact us for a revised quotation and complete the short questionnaire on page 8 as part of the required risk assessment. Our clinic is located within the International Centre for Life, Newcastle, NE1 4EP. Please note appointments will be issued by our Client Liaison Team.

Non-Attendance and Cancellations

If a Donor fails to attend an appointment or for any reason or our Collecting Officer is unable to take a sufficient sample from the Donor, you will be charged the quoted sample collection fee in full. If you would like to cancel an appointment you must notify us a minimum of 48 hours before the appointment or you may be charged the full sample collection fee.

Head Hair and Body Hair

- In order to maintain confidentiality, our Collecting Officers are only provided with essential information. Collecting Officers are instructed to take a sample of head hair in preference to body hair.
- If, however, the Donor does not have sufficient head hair to meet our required minimum weight, the Collecting Officer will take the sample from another area of the body.
- Our Collecting Officers are unable to collect pubic hair. The collection of a pubic hair sample should be arranged with a GP or clinic.
- If, in your opinion, your Donor may not have adequate head hair and you wish to discuss the implications and differences in period of analysis, please contact our Client Liaison Team.

Home Sample Collections

Contact with Donor to Arrange an Appointment

We will call the Donor to ask the relevant questions and to arrange a convenient date and time for sample collection. If after three attempts of trying to contact the Donor we have not succeeded, we will contact you and the responsibility will then fall to you to ask the Donor to contact us to arrange their sample collection.

Body Hair and Pubic Hair

Location of copies: (1) Master File (2) Laboratory (3) NorthGene Office

Under normal circumstances, Collecting Officers do not collect samples of body or pubic hair at a home sample collection. If a body hair sample is required for analysis using a Collecting Officer, a sample collection can be arranged to take place at an official business premises. The collection of pubic hair should be arranged with a GP or clinic.

Confirmation of Sample Collection Telephone Call

Once the sample collection has taken place, our Collecting Officer will call the NorthGene office to confirm that the sample collection has taken place. However, if the office does not receive a telephone call from the collector within 30 minutes of the collection appointment taking place, we will attempt to contact the Donor and if necessary we will contact you. If we are unsuccessful in contacting those individuals stated above, the Police will be called.

Donor Refusing Collecting Officer onto Premises

If a Donor fails to allow the Collecting Officer onto the premises at the time of appointment, the full sample collection fee will be charged.

Location Requirements for sample collection

Our Collecting Officer requires a clean surface on which to lay out equipment and a quiet place where he/she will not be disturbed whilst taking the sample.

Non-Attendance and Cancellations

If a Donor fails to attend an appointment or for any reason our Collection Officer is unable to take a sufficient sample, you will be charged the quoted sample collection fee in full. If you would like to cancel an appointment you must notify us a minimum of 48 hours before the appointment or you may be charged the full sample collection fee.

Please Action

Please complete the questionnaire on page 8 and send it back to us, along with the authorised quotation. We will then contact the Donor to discuss dates for the sample collection.

Home Collection Form

1. Has the donor given you "willing" consent that we can go into their home?		Yes/No
2. Has the donor been ill recently or is he/she currently ill?		Yes/No
3. Have you or anyone from your offices visited the donor's home?		Yes/No
4. Please share with us anything that may make the donor vulnerable when we visit their home?		Yes/No
5. Please share with us anything that may make our Collecting Officer vulnerable when we visit the donor's home?		Yes/No
6. We will require photographic ID from the donor. Is the donor able to provide this? <i>If the donor does not have ID then our Collecting Officer will take a photo of the donor. This will be sent to you to verify their Identity.</i>		Yes/No
7. If a hair test is required, do you know if the Donor has adequate head hair to comply with your quotation request? <i>Head hair grows at a rate of approximately 1cm a month, so for a test to cover a three month period the hair sample will need to be at least 3cm in length.</i>		Yes/No
8. If a blood test is required, do you know if the Donor has previously had any problems with providing a blood sample?		Yes/No or N/A
9. Does the donor suffer from any blood borne viruses, such as Hep B, C or HIV?		Yes/No or N/A
10. Please provide below the Donor's information including telephone number and home address:		
Donor Name		Address
Telephone Number		
Additional Information:		

Location of copies: (1) Master File (2) Laboratory (3) NorthGene Office

Using a GP for Sample Collection

If you have chosen the Donor's General Practitioner (GP) to collect the sample, please consider these important points to ensure the sample is taken correctly and that any unnecessary delays are avoided:

GP's Consent

Please get confirmation from the GP that they are willing to take the sample before instructing NorthGene to dispatch the sample pack. Collecting samples for drug and/or alcohol testing is not a normal NHS procedure and the GP is likely to charge you for this service, or even refuse to do it. A GP who is not expecting to receive a sample pack may refuse to accept it.

Donor's Identification

The Donor's GP should be in a position to identify the Donor. However, in some cases the GP will not have met the Donor. Please be aware of this and double check that identification of the Donor is dealt with (passport, photographic driving license). Failure to identify the Donor could impact on the legality of your case at a later date.

Delivery Address

Please ensure that the delivery address and contact details provided for the GP are correct to ensure successful delivery of the sample pack.

Delivery Method

The sample pack will be dispatched to the GP by first class Royal Mail.

Instructions for Sample Collection

Full instructions on how to take the sample will be included with the sample pack.