

American Drug Testing

Drug-Free Workplace Programs

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DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE ADVISOR

AN ONGOING SERIES TO PROTECT YOUR COMPANY BY HELPING TO KEEP DRUGS OUT OF YOUR WORKPLACE.

Cold Medicines And Their Effect On Your Workplace

With cooler weather around the corner, cold and flu season is not far off. During this time of year, questions surrounding common cold medicines and their impact on drug testing results commonly arise. Some common prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medications may contain drugs such as codeine, hydrocodone, and sympathomimetics, which have been reported to affect workplace drug tests.

C o d e i n e

Codeine is used in some medications as a cough suppressant. When codeine enters the body and is metabolized, it changes to morphine. Both codeine and morphine are used to relieve pain.



The use of codeine-containing products may result in a positive drug

“...when improperly used, hydrocodone can lead to serious illness or injury...”

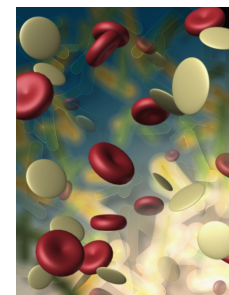
screen for codeine and/or morphine.

H y d r o c o d o n e

This narcotic is widely used to treat pain and is also FDA approved for use in a handful of prescription medications as a cough suppressant. It is also an extremely popular drug of abuse as it can produce feelings of euphoria. Unfortunately, it is highly addictive, and when improperly used, hydrocodone can lead to serious illness or injury. Donors using medications that contain hydrocodone may test positive in some drug test panels.

S y m p a t h o m i m e t i c s

Drugs such as pseudoephedrine, ephedrine, and phenylephrine are commonly used as decongestants in OTC cold and flu medicines or as appetite suppressants. Sympathomimetics like those listed above will not produce a confirmed, positive drug screen. It is a common misconception that OTC cold medications may produce positive results in workplace drug tests but the fact is that while some of these may cause a specimen to initially screen as non-



negative, they will not confirm positive in the second step of the GC/MS testing process. With the two-tiered testing process and the definitive identification and quantification with GC/MS confirmation, the use of these OTC drugs will not result in a confirmed positive drug test.

It is important that the donor keep a record of any such medications that may affect a drug screen. It is suggested that the donor

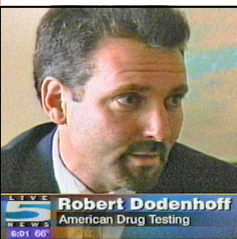
write a list of these medications on his/her copy of the custody and con-



trol form after providing a specimen for a drug screen. This list may serve as a useful reminder to the donor should a justification be required. When a positive result is sent to the Medical Review Officer (MRO), information relating to valid prescriptions or medication use will assist the donor when contacted by the MRO during his/her review and verification of the positive result.

Source: Quest Diagnostics

The Drug-Free Workplace Advisor is published by



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