

Toxicology Experts Advise Caution When Interpreting a Positive Cocaine Test

The American College of Medical Toxicology (ACMT) has released a position statement regarding interpretation of urine analysis for the presence of cocaine metabolites. The College emphasizes that a positive cocaine result on a urine test indicates exposure, but cannot be used to determine clinical impairment.

Phoenix, Arizona ([PRWEB](#)) October 30, 2012 -- The American College of Medical Toxicology (ACMT) supports the ideal of a workforce unimpaired by substance abuse. [Cocaine](#) remains one of the more widely abused substances in the world, and abuse results in health problems that may carry over to the work environment, including heart disease, high blood pressure, strokes, and traumatic injuries. Use of cocaine may lead to missed days of work due to hospitalization or may even result in death. Workplace urine drug testing programs have had many positive effects, including a decline in absenteeism, workplace theft, and on-the-job accidents. However, [ACMT](#) recognizes that positive urine drug tests for cocaine are sometimes misinterpreted as representing evidence of being under the influence of cocaine at the time of the test. In a position statement available on their website, the College emphasizes that a positive urine drug screen does not indicate acute cocaine intoxication, but rather reflects recent exposure to cocaine.

Testing for cocaine can be fraught with interpretive errors common to other tests. While the urine test for presence of cocaine is very accurate, interpretation of the results in the context of a problem in the workplace requires particular skill. The test for cocaine detects breakdown products of the drug for a window of up to five days since last use. Thus, a positive test on a particular day does not mean that the patient used cocaine that day. The bottom line, medical [toxicology](#) experts caution, is that a positive urine cocaine test alone does not mean that an individual is currently impaired, or “high on the job”. The entire clinical picture, including the patient’s vital signs and behavior should be considered before determining if a person is under the influence of cocaine at a particular point in time.

The ACMT is a professional, nonprofit association of physicians with recognized expertise in medical toxicology. The College is dedicated to advancing the science and practice of medical toxicology.