Alcohol Monitoring in the Justice System

Sensitive and timely screening methods are vital for agencies whose role is to ensure that individuals under their supervision are abstaining from alcohol.

Early recognition of problem drinking or relapse for court-related purposes such as criminal justice or child welfare is important to help assure effective treatment and to protect at-risk populations. Until recently, screening protocols have been hampered by insufficiently sensitive diagnostic methods. The reliability of self-reporting is limited by underreporting, and the time frame for identifying alcohol use via ethanol testing is usually limited to 12 hours because of rapid metabolism and excretion.

Key Facts

- Expressly tailored to the needs of criminal justice (probation and parole), child welfare and family services agencies
- Significantly longer detection window than screens for parent ethanol
- Immunoassay screen with LC/MS/MS confirmation of any presumptive positives over a 500 ng/mL cut off
Dependable Alcohol Monitoring
To overcome these barriers, research has focused on developing alcohol biomarkers with a longer detection window. Among these markers is ethyl glucuronide (EtG), a minor ethanol metabolite. Positive EtG results provide a strong indication that a person has recently been exposed to alcohol, even when ethanol is no longer detectable. The detection window for a urine EtG test ranges from 24 to 80 hours, depending on cutoff and usage patterns.

“For alcohol monitoring related to probation, parole and family services mandates, there’s a lot at stake, and it is critical that agencies have access to accurate, prompt and cost-effective alcohol testing resources,” says Matt Resch, product manager at Quest Diagnostics. “EtG alcohol testing is a valuable tool for evaluating whether an individual is abstaining from the consumption of alcohol, and it provides more flexibility than other detection methods.”

EtG Alcohol Testing for Court-Related Testing
Designed specifically for court-related testing, this protocol is not currently FDA 510(k) cleared, and results cannot be used for workplace drug testing or clinical diagnosis.

For the court system, however, EtG alcohol testing offers significant advantages:

- Specimens that screen presumptively positive for EtG are confirmed by LC/MS/MS for both EtG and ethylsulfate (EtS), another longer-term ethanol metabolite, the process reduces both turnaround times and costs for negative results.
- Specimens are screened upon arrival at the laboratory and, if negative, reported the same day.
- Expert support and quality assurance from Quest Diagnostics, a trusted laboratory.

Getting Started
Implementing EtG testing at your agency is simple. Once you connect with Quest Diagnostics and sign an agreement to use this EtG alcohol testing panel only for approved court-related purposes, we will send supplies, and you can get started right away.

For more information, contact your Quest Diagnostics Sales or Account Management representative, or call our National Customer Support Center at 800-877-7484.

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