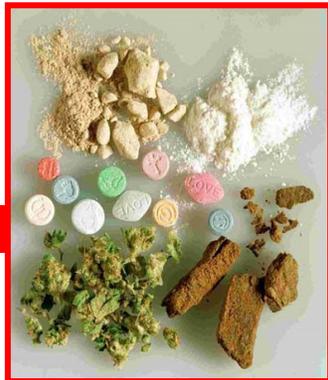




CONSUMER GUIDE TO HOME DRUG TESTING



Bucks County, PA



Acknowledgements

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Bucks County Commissioners:
Charles H. Martin, Chairman;
James F. Cawley, Esq., Vice Chairman;
Diane M. Ellis-Marseglia, LCSW



Bucks County Drug and Alcohol Commission, Inc.
(215) 773-9313



The Council of Southeast Pennsylvania, Inc.
1-800-221-6333

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Frequently Asked Questions:

I think my child may be drunk or high right now...I'm worried he's in danger....What should I do?

**If there is an immediate danger,
CALL 9-1-1
or take your child to the emergency room of your local hospital.**

This guide is not to be used to advise parents in an emergency.

What are some signs that my child might be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs?

- Speech: Slurred
- Movements: Unsteady
- Eyes: Glassy, red, or dilated pupils
- Responsiveness: Overly irritable, lethargic, or inappropriate
- Odor: Alcohol/Marijuana on breath or clothing

I want a professional to assess my child for alcohol or other drug use. Who do I call?

- Ask your family doctor for a recommendation
- Seek the services of a certified drug and alcohol counselor
- Call one of several organizations that assess children for substance use. See page 15 of this guide for contact information.

Will most test kits tell me if my child has been drinking alcohol?

No. Most test kits do not test for the presence of alcohol. See page 8 for more information on this topic.

Are home drug tests foolproof?

No. While home drug tests are generally accurate, they are not foolproof and can be misleading in a number of ways. See pages 10-11 for more details.

Notes and Questions:

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and concerns about the use of these tests. *If you are concerned that a child in your care might be in immediate danger call 911 or seek medical attention right away.*

Adolescence is a critical period of human development. The body and brain grow and change rapidly. Families function better and children mature more successfully when they grow up alcohol and drug free. The idea that alcohol and other drug use are normal for teens is mistaken. Parents must set and communicate clear, drug-free standards to guide children away from drugs. Conversations about these family rules should begin early, during the child's elementary school years, and should continue through adolescence and college.

What's the Big Deal?

Substance abuse is a significant danger to the health and safety of young people. Despite the best efforts of parents, educators, and communities, children and adolescents sometimes experiment with alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Addiction or other serious health problems can be a result.

Each year thousands of children die from substance use. Causes include unintended overdose, reactions with medications, or substance-related accidents. **These deaths are preventable.** Research shows that a child's brain is not fully mature until they reach their early twenties. Early introduction of alcohol and drugs is known to delay the healthy development of the brain

What's the Solution?

There are many ways for parents to create a drug and alcohol free environment. One of the most important is: Have clear and consistent family discussions. Be sure to talk regularly about what is acceptable behavior. Ongoing communication within the family, before and during adolescence, is a key to successful prevention.

Parents may consider the use of home drug testing as a prevention approach. These tests can serve both as a deterrent or as a method to find out whether drug use has already occurred. There are many different risks and benefits of this kind of testing.

An Important Word of Caution:

Home drug testing is a personal decision that only you can make for your

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family. It is not a magical solution, and should be entered into with care. No drug test can be considered a replacement for a professional assessment. Please read this guide carefully as it may help you to decide whether home drug testing is right for your family.

Deciding if Home Drug Testing is Right for Your Family:

Ask yourself these questions. If you are unsure, ask your family doctor or pharmacist for assistance:

- Is the test I am considering designed for **home use by parents**?
- What are the **risks and benefits** of the type of testing I am considering?
- Am I prepared to discuss with my child my **reasons for using** a home drug test?
- Do I fully understand what this test kit **can and cannot** tell me?
- Am I prepared to follow sample collection instructions **exactly**?
- Am I ready and prepared to act **calmly and thoughtfully** if my child tests positive for drug use? Do I know what steps to take next?
- Is a laboratory retest recommended? Will I **commit to follow through** with laboratory re-testing if my child receives a positive home drug test result? Do I know how to do this?

Potential Benefits of Home Drug Testing

Drug Testing is One Part of a Prevention Message

Many people believe that just having a drug testing kit in at home can discourage alcohol and other drug use by children and teens. They further believe that home testing can help strengthen the child's belief that if they use drugs their parents can find this out with a drug test. The idea is that

this may prevent a child from using drugs in the first place.

Drug Testing as an Excuse to Say “No!”

Others report another possible benefit for children dealing with peer pressure. Knowing that he or she may be tested at any time can give a child a believable explanation as to why they choose not to use drugs. This way, the child may be better able to resist peer pressure without “losing face.”

Drug Testing Provides a Quick Answer

Parents who are concerned their child has used drugs recently may want to use a home drug testing kit to find out. Traces of drugs may still be in the body. While home testing offers quick results, a testing kit can only provide an initial screen for substance use. Results should be verified by laboratory testing (see pages 9-10 for more on this topic). The desire for *rapid information* is understandable, but must be balanced with the need for *accurate information*. Evaluation by a substance use professional may be of assistance in reaching this balance.

Privacy

Some parents may view a child’s substance use as a private, family matter. These families may find that home testing allows them to address substance use in the privacy of their home. They may not wish to involve a school or healthcare system. Ideally, though, these systems should work together for the benefit of young people. Parents may also feel some reassurance knowing that there are strict healthcare and drug and alcohol [confidentiality laws](#) in place. These safeguard information shared with a professional. Many resources are available in the community, outside of the home, through county government and school systems. These may assist parents if they suspect their child is using substances. There is a listing of community resources on pages 13-16 of this guide.

Detecting Multiple Drugs

Another potential benefit of home testing is that many tests can look for a range of different substances. Test kits vary widely, but some can detect up to 12 different substances. Parents who are worried their child might be

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have no idea what kind might be involved. So a kit that tests for a wider range of substances may be able to tell parents both if drug use has occurred and what type of drug has been used. Important note: Most home testing kits do not test for alcohol use. This is important because alcohol is by far the most commonly misused drug by adolescents.

Limitations of Home Drug Testing

Home drug testing kits appear to be useful and convenient. However, there are some potential limitations. A parent should understand these when considering a home drug testing kit. While the following do not necessarily cancel out the value of testing, they are important factors to consider. They may help with using testing safely and effectively.

Drug Testing is One Part of a Larger Equation

Home drug testing, if used, should be only one part of a family's overall plan to prevent alcohol and other drug use by children and teens. Testing is a tool. If chosen, it should be nested within a larger plan for prevention. This involves active discussions about drug and alcohol use, parental monitoring of the child's free time and appropriate role modeling by parents. Don't rely on a single strategy.

Drug Testing Instructions Must Be Followed Precisely

Each testing kit should provide clear instructions that explain how the test should be appropriately given. Failure to follow the instructions carefully may easily lead to inaccurate results. One of the most important of these instructions is to follow the guidelines for laboratory re-testing in the event that a home drug test returns an initial positive result. In essence, it is incorrect to assume that a positive test result is definitive proof of drug use unless a secondary retest is conducted to confirm the results. Home testing is not and should not be considered complete until the retest is conducted.

Not all Test Kits are Created Equal

Each testing kit on the market should list the drugs that it tests for. Some may test for only a single drug, while others may test for up to twelve different drugs. A test that is not designed to detect cocaine for example cannot return a positive result for that drug even if it is present. The more comprehensive the test, the more likely it will detect substances.

Home Test Results are only A Snapshot in Time

The results of any home drug testing only examines a “snapshot in time.” In other words, a test kit can only detect if substances have been used within a certain window of time. This window varies from drug to drug. A negative test result may only indicate that a drug has not been used in the recent past, and a negative result is not a guarantee that future use will not occur, so parents must remain watchful.

What Types of Drug Tests are Available?

Testing a urine sample is the most common form of over-the-counter home drug testing. A urine test has the person being tested urinate directly into a test cup. The advantage of this method is the wide range and availability of over-the-counter urine testing kits. The disadvantage is that giving a sample may feel invasive to the adolescent; it may be awkward for both parent and child. This is because directly observing specimen production (watching the child urinate) is recommended. This ensures that the sample is valid. It makes it difficult to ‘cheat’ on the test. Cheating might include adding a substance, diluting the sample with water, or substituting a different sample.

To avoid this challenge, testing of hair or saliva samples can be done. These look for traces of drugs and alcohol; however, they are not generally available over-the-counter in pharmacies. How quickly test results are desired is something else to consider. Testing hair samples can take several weeks. Urine and saliva sample tests can provide rapid results, but only of the initial at-home test. Follow-up laboratory testing of urine or saliva is still necessary; this may require several additional days. Cost is another consideration. Home urine test kits may vary from under \$10 to \$100. Mostly the cost difference is based on the number of drugs a test can detect. Kits that test for multiple drugs tend to be more expensive than kits that test for only one or two drugs. If a parent is concerned about a particular drug, such as marijuana, he or she may want to use a test that only looks for marijuana. However, if a parent needs or wants to detect multiple drugs, a “multiple panel” test is the better choice.

Where Can I Get a Drug Testing Kit?

Urine drug testing kits are available in most local pharmacies. These can be purchased without a prescription. Pharmacies often carry more than

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one kit, but they may stock only a single brand name. Drug stores typically sell kits that test for one drug to up to 12 drugs. Single drug tests are called a 'single test panel.' Kits testing for up to 12 different drugs are called a 'multiple test panel.' Generally, pharmacies only carry test kits for urine samples. Many also carry home breathalyzer kits; these detect just alcohol. If you are going to buy a test from a drug store, it is recommended that you review your selection with the pharmacist or your family doctor. This should help ensure that the kit you are considering is appropriate for home use. It may also help determine if the kit should meet your particular testing needs.

It is also possible to purchase drug testing kits from a variety of websites. Purchasing through this route may provide for more privacy. However, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has reported that home drug testing kits which are sold on-line frequently do not meet FDA standards and may have misleading labeling. Saliva and hair sample testing are other methods to test for drug misuse. However, these types of tests are not generally available in drug stores. Instead, they may be ordered either by mail or through the Internet, although the above cautions still apply.

My Child Just Tested Positive. What Do I Do Now?

A positive result on a home drug test is a cause for concern rather than alarm. It is important that parents REMAIN CALM so they can ACT THOUGHTFULLY. Remember, a positive home test result is only a first test. Before taking any action, it is absolutely necessary that parents obtain a confirmation test. This is done by a laboratory. There should be directions with your test kit that tell you how to get a lab test. This step is very important because it is possible for the home test to return a "false positive" result. That would mean that the screen indicates that traces of a drug are present, when in fact there has been no actual drug use. The laboratory confirmation test is more sensitive and accurate at detecting actual use than a home kit is.

Waiting for lab test results is a time to do just that: wait; unless your child admits to use. If an admission happens, it can be an excellent starting point for an important discussion. Parents should still continue with lab testing. If there is no admission of use, it is not recommended that parents schedule a drug and alcohol assessment right away. Nor is immediately enacting punishment recommended. It is, of course, wise to monitor the child more closely, whether they admit use or not, while awaiting laboratory test confirmation.

Parents should act to more fully understand the scope of the drug use if

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the lab test also returns a positive result or your child admits to use. This is generally done by having an alcohol and other drug professional assess your child. Again, while the assessment is being arranged, parents may also choose to monitor their child's time and movements more closely.

My Child's Drug Test was Negative....Can I Relax?

A negative result on a home drug test can be a welcome relief to concerned parents. But parents must understand fully what a negative result means. A negative result on a home test is not a guarantee that a child has not or will not use drugs, either in the past or in the future. It simply means that the home test shows no evidence right now of the use of a certain group of substances over a certain period of time. It is still possible that drug use had occurred, but far enough in the past that it cannot be detected now by the home test. Also, parents must remember that not all home tests look for all substances. So, a test that does not test for cocaine, for example, cannot give parents any information on whether the child is using cocaine. The label of each home test will list the substances that it searches for. But no single test looks for all substances, so negative results must be understood with this in mind.

Finally, it is possible for a child to intentionally interfere with a drug test so that it returns a "false negative" result. A false negative result means that while there actually may be traces of a drug in the body, the home test fails to detect it. There are numerous ways that a child can beat a drug test. Many of these methods are, unfortunately, found easily on the Internet. If you find evidence that a child may be searching out these methods, it is suggestive that drug use may have occurred.

If a child's drug test comes back with a negative result, parents are then encouraged to give their child positive feedback. Praise and encouragement are powerful ways to shape future behavior. Parents are also encouraged to continue talking with their child. Specifically, continue discussing the risks of using; the benefits of not using; and the clear expectation that a child is not to use drugs or alcohol. This shows that parents are concerned and aware, and that they will take assertive action if they believe drug and alcohol use is occurring.

What are Some Alternatives to Home Drug Testing?

One alternative to the home drug test is to have testing done by your

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child's pediatrician or family medical doctor. This may decrease some uneasiness with urine sample collection. It also ensures that the sample will be tested by a licensed laboratory. Parents interested in this option are encouraged to contact their child's medical practice. Ask about their procedures and, if you'd like, arrange an appointment. If needed, this health care professional might suggest, and possibly help with, a referral to a substance abuse professional.

Another alternative is to go directly to a local professional lab for a drug test. A physician's prescription is usually needed. This option may also help to reduce concerns, such as collecting the sample and interpreting the results.

Community Resources

There are a range of community resources that can be helpful to your family. These include prevention education and activities, assessment, treatment, self-help groups, family support, and recovery support services.

Prevention: Prevention education by parents is the first line of defense against the development of experimentation and substance use problems. Parents are encouraged to have clear and honest discussions on a regular basis with their adolescent about not using substances. Research shows that parents who do so are much less likely to have an adolescent who develops substance-related problems. Additionally, many communities and schools provide prevention initiatives and parents are encouraged to participate actively in them. Should any substance use be known to them, parents are encouraged to act assertively to address the problem, through early intervention. This may take the form of additional education, brief counseling, and other family-based efforts to support abstinence and promote healthier choices.

Assessment: A full assessment conducted by a licensed or certified drug and alcohol professional is an essential first step in addressing known or suspected substance use by adolescents. The purpose of the assessment is to obtain a fuller picture of the adolescent and family, to understand his or her strengths and problems, and to identify the extent to which the substance use may or may not be present. If present, an assessment will help to evaluate whether the substance use is experimental or addictive in nature. Upon completion of the assessment, the professional should be able to provide the family a concrete impression of the problem or problems and some clear recommendations on how to proceed (next steps) to address

the problem. The final pages of this guide lists sites where parents can arrange for a professional substance use assessment.

Treatment: One outcome that may arise as a result of assessment is a recommendation for professional treatment. Treatment may range from outpatient individual counseling on a weekly basis, to group counseling several times per week, or even 24 hour inpatient care for several days or longer. The type and length of treatment recommended will be based upon the information the professional gathers and upon the availability of local resources. Parents who have an adolescent who receives a recommendation for treatment are encouraged to work closely with their assessment provider to match their adolescent with the recommended level and type of care.

Self-Help Groups: Over the years many people have found that self-help groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) have been very helpful to individuals seeking to stop using substances. These meetings are free, anonymous, relatively common, and open to anyone who has a desire to stop using. Some groups, however, are targeted to young people. There are other self-help groups that may offer similar assistance. Self-help groups are generally not professionally facilitated. Instead they utilize peer support to help each other refrain from use and address related problems.

Recovery Support Services: Once an individual has chosen to stop using substances, additional supports that assist that individual to maintain their abstinence can be quite helpful. These supports are called Recovery Support Services, and they generally involve practical, peer-to-peer support and education by others who have conquered similar problems.

Family Education and Support: Substance abuse issues often impact and confuse family members of the person who is using or has used. Parents and other family members may not be sure how to help the affected individual, when and how to set limits, and how to take care of themselves in the face of a substance-using or addicted family member. Family education and supports can be of assistance to concerned and struggling families.

General Disclaimer:

This consumer guide is intended to provide the public with general information about home drug testing. It is not intended to be a recommendation for or against the practice of home testing. Rather, it is intended to help parents and others understand its potential risks and benefits. Caution and careful thought is urged when considering, choosing, and implementing home testing and when interpreting and confirming home testing kit results. The safest and wisest course of action is to seek a professional assessment if you have a concern that your adolescent may be using alcohol or other drugs.



**Bucks County Resources
For Assessment & Treatment Of
Alcohol and Other Drug Problems**

If you are covered by a health insurance policy, you must first contact this company for a listing of approved assessment and treatment agencies in your community. The contact information can be found on the back of your insurance card.

If you do not have health insurance, you may be eligible for Medicare, Medical Assistance or county funding. The following assessment sites will assist you in making this determination.

With county funds preference is given to pregnant women and intravenous drug users in the provision of assessment and treatment services.

Aldie Counseling Center 11 Welden Drive Doylestown, PA 18901 215-345-8530 www.aldie.org	Aldie Counseling Center 2291 Cabot Boulevard West Langhorne, PA 19047 215-642-3230 www.aldie.org
Penn Foundation – The Recovery Center 807 Lawn Avenue Sellersville, PA 18960 215-257-9999 1-800-245-7366 www.pennfoundation.org	TODAY, Inc. (Adolescents) P.O. Box 908 Newtown, PA 18940 215-948-4713 www.todayinc.org
The Council of Southeast Pennsylvania, Inc. Bailiwick Office Campus 252 West Swamp Road Unit 12 Doylestown, PA 18901 24 HOUR HOTLINE: 1-800-221-6333 www.bccadd.org	Family Services Association of Bucks County 4 Cornerstone Drive Langhorne, PA 19047 215-757-6916 www.fsabc.org Specialty – those with a co- occurring mental illness; HIV/AIDS; Older Adults

**&
Services**

As part of
visit, the
advise you of
treatment
may need



**Treatment
Recovery**

your assessment
counselor will
the type of
you or your child
and your options
for treatment and recovery. The agencies listed on page 15 will let
you know of your options, including the names of additional
treatment facilities in your community.

For more information about the full array of services available to you
as a Bucks County resident, go to the website:

www.bucks.pa.networkofcare.org

If you have a complaint about assessment or treatment services you
receive, contact:

Bucks County Drug & Alcohol Commission, Inc.
Complaint and Grievance Department
215-773-9313 dnacomplaints@co.bucks.pa.us

NOTES

Consumer Guide to Home Drug Testing

SURVEY

Was this consumer guide helpful to you?
If so, how? If not, why not?

What additional questions, if any, would you like to have seen
addressed in this guide?

Did this guide help to inform your decision about home drug
testing?

Did you purchase a drug test after reading this booklet?

Rate your overall satisfaction with this booklet - please circle
(1 being lowest - 10 being highest)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Please detach this page and mail your comments or
suggestions to:

Bucks County Drug and Alcohol Commission. Inc.
600 Louis Drive Suite 102-A
Warminster, PA 18974



**Bucks County Commissioners:
Charles H. Martin, Chairman;
Robert G. Loughery, Vice Chairman;
Diane M. Ellis-Marseglia, LCSW**

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