

Signs of possible substance abuse or misuse

One or more of these signs may be an indicator of possible substance abuse and misuse. They are also indicators to other medical conditions.

- Slurred or rambling, stumbling, incoherent speech
- Drowsiness or inability to stay awake
- Poor co-ordination, staggering, disorientation
- Unsure standing, turning, moving
- Irrational or inappropriate behaviour (belligerence, violence, etc.)
- Nausea
- Inflamed, glassy or droopy eyes, dilated/constricted pupils
- Hallucinations
- Mood swings, unpredictability (hyperactivity, depression, euphoria)
- Frequent sniffing or touching of the nose
- Personality changes
- Heightened reflexes
- Exaggerated confidence or glibness
- Forgetfulness
- Lack of attention
- Agitation, restlessness, anxiety and paranoia
- Runny or bleeding nose
- Aroma of alcohol or drugs
- Limited attention span, difficulty concentrating
- Hand tremors
- Violent tendencies, loss of temper or irritability
- Time distortion
- Mental confusion, bizarre thoughts, ideas or statements
- Poor personal hygiene

Job Performance Patterns Indicating Possible Substance Abuse and Misuse

One or more of these patterns may be an indicator of possible substance abuse and misuse. They are also indicators to other medical conditions.

- Extended absences from the job
- High accident rate
- Inability to work with others, friction in relationships
- Chronic, excessive absenteeism pattern
- Poor workmanship on the job (e.g. error, wasted materials)
- Failure to complete jobs/tasks etc. in a timely manner
- Difficulty concentrating
- Confusion, inability to handle jobs of increasing complexity
- Spasmodic work patterns
- Irrational personal behaviour on the job (overreaction, unusual personality change, decline in personal hygiene, etc.)

- Four or more incidents of absences (sickness, tardiness, or being AWOL) in the preceding twelve months
- Suspicious absence pattern such as:
 - Immediately preceding or following days off
 - Coincident with weekends
 - Always on the same shift
- Swings in activity level – hyperactivity to sluggishness
- Inability to perform two tasks at the same time (divided attention), such as handling a discussion while physically performing a task
- Sporadic or poor workmanship or job performance
- Change in attitude – moody, resentful of criticism, always casting blame on others, sudden inability to work with others
- Chronic forgetfulness or broken promises

Contributing Evidence:

- Physical evidence (drug paraphernalia, alcohol beverage bottles, etc.)
- Smell of marijuana, alcohol
- Attempts to hide or destroy evidence
- Observance of use
- Suspicious employee reaction

Guidance script for managers requiring an employee to undergo a substance test

"I require you to undertake a drug and alcohol test. This is because <see policy: either as a result of an incident or reasonable suspicion of use or as a result of being chosen through random selection from the pool of safety-critical posts>. This will be conducted <by whom> at <location> at <time>. You will need to supply a sample of your saliva by means of a mouth swab and/or a sample of breath. There will be an immediate result for both tests."

"If the tests prove to be negative, you will be asked to resume your normal work."

"If the test for alcohol proves to be positive as defined within Council policy you will be suspended on full pay. I shall arrange transport to home/elsewhere."

"If the saliva tests positive to drugs another sample may need to be taken under chain of custody conditions (this means that the sample will be dealt with securely and that it cannot be tampered with) and forwarded to an independent laboratory for further analysis. The results should be available within 48 hours. In the meantime, you will be suspended on full pay. I shall arrange transport to home/elsewhere. I shall contact you at home <check contact number> as soon as the results have been confirmed."

"In the event of a positive result being found for drug or alcohol presence that is above the limit defined in Council policy, you will remain suspended whilst an investigation under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure is conducted. The matter will be treated as an issue of potential misconduct, possibly gross misconduct. If as a result of this investigation a formal hearing is called, the outcome may be disciplinary action up to and including dismissal."

"As part of the procedure for testing, you may request a colleague to be present as a witness and you will be asked for your consent for the tests to take place. Do you wish for a colleague to be present? <Who?> (*this will need to be someone who is readily available if the test is to be carried out immediately*). Refusal to provide a sample may be viewed as an act of gross misconduct which may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal."

"If you are concerned or have questions about this test or the reason for it, you may wish to discuss this with me, a Personnel Officer from the HR team or your union representative. If you wish to make complaint about how the test has been applied, you should state this in writing to my manager <who?>."