

Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy: Drug Testing Guide

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DISCLAIMER



By advocating for a harm reduction approach, we are not condoning or encouraging the use of recreational substances. There is no such thing as completely risk free drug use but that does not mean we cannot greatly reduce the risks Just Say Know!

What is Harm Reduction?

Harm Reduction is about meeting people where they are at. It is an approach that doesn't take a position for or against drug use, but rather acknowledges that it is a common and natural human behaviour. It is unrealistic to expect an end to the recreational use of psychoactive substances. Harm reduction strategies are meant to keep people who use drugs safe. There are conscientious ways of using substances that can greatly reduce the harms associated with them. In fact, many of the harms associated with drug use are a direct result of the suppression of objective information and education.

This guide will focus on reagent drug testing as a method of providing information about the substances one might consider putting in their body. Reagent testing is a resource for making informed decisions about substance use and has been successfully implanted at many music festivals.

Why Check Your Drugs?

- The drug market is a black market and therefore entirely unregulated. There is always a chance that there is something in the drugs you bought that you don't think should be there.
- There has been a massive increase in overdose deaths due to adulterated substances in Canada over the past several years.
- The drug market in British Columbia has never been as impure as it is now.
- It's an easy way to save your own or your friends' lives
- Cost-effective

Bottom Line: Unless you're a chemist synthesizing your own drugs...

ALWAYS TEST BEFORE YOU INGEST

Reagent Tests

- Reagent tests, also known as colimetric tests, can indicate if there is at least some of the desired substance within the sample.
- Provide an indication of what else might be in your sample if there is a high enough volume of it
- However it must be noted that these tests are not perfect and can't give you a full pro- file of the sample's contents.
- Even still, what information it does give you can allow you to make a more well informed decision about whether or not you want to take your drugs or dispose of them.
- It's best to use multiple reagents to test for the presence of adulterants within a given sample.

Marquis

- Used for testing MDMA, MDA, MDE and many other substances.
- Usually used first when starting a series of tests.

Ehrlich

- Reacts to indoles, such as LSD, psilocin, 5-MeO(xx), etc., but does not differentiate between them.
- Useful for ruling out 25B-, 25C- and 25I-NBOMe which cause no reaction.

Mandelin

- Shortest shelf life of about 6 months—more regular replacement needed
- Reacts strongly with the MD(xx) group and many other substances.
- Reacts well and has a distinct colour with PMMA and PMA.
- Best test for detecting ketamine.
- Can also detect cocaine, but the colour change is weak.

How to Use a Testkit

- The reagent is dropped directly onto the a sample of the substance being tested. This will cause a change in colour over a period of 30-60 seconds, which can allow for identification of the chemicals in the sample being tested.
- As you can see from the charts in the previous page and below, each sequence of colour change represents a different chemical that the sample might be.
- It can be difficult to get exact results using only one test and there is always the possibility that you'll miss small temporary changes in colour that might indicate the presence of an adulterant. Additionally, concentrations of adulterants can be spread unevenly throughout a given sample. It is therefore very difficult to get an accurate result using a single trial of a single test.
- For optimal results, the use of several different test kits is recommended.
- Test results with the same batch of reagent can be inconsistent and a single one can't rule out the presence of all other substances. Certain reagents may not even react to what is in the sample at all.
- The following pages will go over specific guidelines for the most thorough methods of checking common recreational drugs - If you can't afford the whole battery of tests don't sweat; any information is better than none. At the very least run a few tests, even if you're using the same reagent.

***ALWAYS** read the instructions that come with the test kit you purchase. This guide may not capture every relevant factor of every test or supplier.

Procedures for Common Drugs

LSD: Ehrlich

- If it turns purple then it is LSD or another indole.
- If no reaction, use the 3 M's (Marquis, Mecke, and Mandelin) to test for 25I-NBOMe, which reacts dark brown.

Ketamine: The 3 M's

- Ketamine reacts only with the Mandelin test, turning brown, and should not react to Marquis or Mecke.

MDMA/Ecstasy/MD(xx): The 3 M's

- Always start by testing three samples using the Marquis, Mecke and Mandelin reagents.
- Even with a positive result on the first test, it is important to do all three tests to get a more complete picture of what the substance might be and to cross-reference the reactions with the colour charts to decide which test to do next.
- Other test needed to narrow down the substance even more.

On Inconclusive Tests:

What if the color change is not on the color chart?

- The substance may be something the tests are not designed for, or it may be a mixture of several substances causing several reactions to obscure the overall colour change.

What if a presumed substance is not listed on the color chart?

- Go to the Bunk Police reaction videos or ecstasydata.org and search on the presumed substance's name.
- If a result is found then do the 3 M's and see if the colour results obtained match what the website describes.

What if a substance gives inconsistent or inconclusive results?

- Sometimes results using one reagent strongly suggest a match with a particular substance, but the results with other reagents do not match what one would expect for that particular substance.
- Inconsistent results = inconclusive
- If the reagents are expired, or may have been exposed to excessive heat or light, or may have become contaminated during use, then tests should be repeated with fresh reagents.
- An inconclusive result can occur when the sample contains something else that the tests have not been designed for. This is also why it is recommended to do all 3 M's and cross-reference their results.

Some Additional Harm Reduction Strategies

Drug checking isn't the only way to stay safe! It is a major tool in your harm reduction arsenal but there is still a lot more that you can do to stay safe.

1) Reagent tests can't tell you just how strong or pure a substance is. It's always good to sample a small amount of something when you first get it. Your body will give the most accurate information on how it's going to respond.

2) Always make sure to measure your doses! There can be extreme variation in the dosage per pill. It's never a bad idea to invest in a small scale. Check out websites like erowid.com for comprehensive information.

3) Information! There are many great online resources that will be incredibly important tools in your harm reduction arsenal. Especially if you are trying something new, look it up on erowid.com or the bluelight forum.

Resources

- UBC Okanagan Health and Wellness provides naloxone kits and other harm reduction supplies free of charge. Call 250 807 9270 for more information or to book an appointment.
- Kelowna Mental Health and Substance Use services are located at 1340 Ellis Street in Kelowna and can be reached at 250 868 7788.
- Visit Living Positive Resource Centre for harm reduction supplies and services. Located at 168 Asher Road in Kelowna – they can be reached at 778 753 5830.
- Order test kits at bunkpolice.com