

The Reality of Turnaround Time

The amount of time it takes to receive a drug test result can depend on many factors. Negative drug test results typically take no longer than 1 business day from the time the specimen arrives at the laboratory. Non-negative results typically take 3 - 4 business days from the time the specimen arrives at the laboratory. Statistically, we find our average overall turnaround time for a client is less than 2 business days on negative results.

I use the term typically in order to be realistic, honest and frank - there is a lot of human interaction in this process and things can happen. Couriers are involved and the specimens travel via car and airplane as well as with common carriers like DHL, Fed Ex etc. In addition, although a result can be reported as negative it might have tested non-negative first and had to go on for further testing. Time of collection, weekends, holidays etc also all affect turnaround time, for example a specimen collected at 4:50pm might miss the courier pickup and would not get to the lab for an extra day. A specimen collected on a Friday, might not be tested at the lab until Monday.

Most importantly is that one understands the process:

1. Specimens are collected at a collection facility or on site at client facility.
2. Specimens are transported to a laboratory usually reaching the lab after transport from a courier to a plane and arriving at the lab usually the next morning.
3. Specimens are tested; negatives are released to the medical review office for review and reporting to the client - which is typically the same day as released from the lab.
4. Specimens testing non-negative at the lab are sent for retesting under GC/MS confirmation - this is done a day later. These specimens whether negative or positive are now released from the lab for review and reporting to the client - and these that are negative are typically now reported the same day as released from the lab.
5. On confirmed positive results the MRO must speak to the donor, turnaround time is now a variable of getting the donor to communicate with the MRO which is sometimes a challenge.

The MRO attempts contact with the donor several times each day and will also request assistance if having difficulties. Results received from the lab as positive may take 3 - 4 business days from the time the specimen arrived at the lab.

Every major vendor and every major lab basically perform the same way although some may make promises of quicker turn around time which may not be the exact truth because of the human interaction involved.

When a result is delayed it is important to find how why so that any avoidable problems can be corrected and not occur in the future. Your drug testing vendor can help you with this, it is always important to have specific examples and details of a delayed result.

For questions or additional information please call DRUG TESTING USA at 1 888 441 4599

