

Toxicology Testing:

Information for Patients and Families

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What is a toxicology test?

Toxicology tests are medical tests that look for certain chemicals in a person's urine, blood, hair, etc. For newborn babies, testing can be done on meconium (baby's first dark poops), urine, or umbilical cord tissue that is saved after birth. These tests look for many different chemicals, including things like alcohol, cannabis, over-the-counter or prescription medications, and non-prescribed substances like cocaine, methamphetamine, or fentanyl. Different hospitals use different toxicology tests; your medical team can tell you which test(s) they are recommending and what kinds of chemicals the tests will look for.

Why is my medical team recommending a toxicology test?

There are many different reasons why your medical team may recommend a toxicology test for you or your baby. The results of a toxicology test may help create a better plan to take care of you and your baby, both in the hospital and after discharge. For example, if a person is disoriented or confused without a clear explanation, a toxicology test could help the medical team know if there is a medication or substance that might be the cause. Similarly, if a baby is acting sick without a clear explanation, a toxicology test could help the medical team know if a medication or substance might be the cause. Some medications

and substances can affect how a baby feeds or sleeps, or their breathing. These can be important factors for determining when a baby is safe to go home from the hospital. If you are not sure why your medical team is recommending a toxicology test, please ask.

What are the benefits and risks of having a toxicology test done?

The results of a toxicology test may help the medical team better care for you and/or your baby. For example, if your baby is having trouble feeding, a toxicology test may help the medical team decide if certain medications could help your baby eat better. For some birthing individuals who would like to breastfeed or chestfeed, a toxicology test may help show that their breastmilk is safe to give to the baby since these tests cannot be used on breastmilk. Risks of having a toxicology test done include the possibility of false positive or false negative test results. In some cases, this may require that additional testing be sent. Additionally, if the medical team is worried about your safety and/or your baby's safety, test results may be disclosed to Adult Protective Services or Child Protective Services. ***In Colorado, having a positive toxicology test during pregnancy/at birth does not mean the baby has been abused or neglected.***



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What if I don't want the medical team to do a toxicology test?

You can tell your medical team if you don't want them to do a toxicology test. Unless it is an emergency, your medical team will not do the toxicology test if you do not agree. However, without the information from the toxicology test, the medical team may not be able to care for you and/or your baby as well, and you/your baby's health may be at risk.

Who can I talk to if I still have questions about a toxicology test?

Your medical team can answer questions about the toxicology test they are recommending, like what it tests for, why they are recommending it, and how the results will help them better care for you and/or your baby. If you have questions about a toxicology test and your medical team does not know the answer, your medical team can call the hospital laboratory, the poison control center, or a social worker to get your questions answered.



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