



Don't hand fake pee to this guy 1:56

WORKPLACE

# Fake pee is trickling into drug tests, but there are ways to flush out the cheaters

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Pee is for sale.

It is in bottles behind the counter at the 7-Eleven in Lee's Summit and the BP gas station on Broadway. Smoke shops such as Cooper's Broadway Tobacco sell it, as do Amazon and eBay.

Technically, it is synthetic urine sold in kits with suggestive brand names such as Clean Stream, Quick Fix, Sub Solution and UPass.

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Let's just say fake pee is as readily available as marijuana in Colorado, and its sale or possession is similarly illegal in some states.

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The idea is that slipping synthetic urine instead of your own into the specimen cup — perhaps after a Mile-High vacation — means you can beat the drug test required to land that new job or keep the one you have.

“Some of those work. Some of them don’t,” said Abigail Potter, manager of safety and occupational health policy at the American Trucking Associations. “The use of them within the federal drug program we believe to be very rare, but we do know that it exists.”

Consumers and product reviewers reach similar conclusions as they alternately praise and curse synthetic urine products and various detox or body flush products in social media and online posts.



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Synthetic urine kits The Star found in the Kansas City area range in price from \$14.99 to \$40. Officials for the makers either did not respond to an inquiry or could not be reached.

Area vendors say the kits are regular sellers. It’s a Dream Smoke Shop in Kansas City sells synthetic urine or detox kits on a daily basis, manager Josh Funk said.

Failed drug tests, however, remain a serious problem not only for job applicants but also for employers. Companies complain that as many as half of applicants fail the screening required for some manufacturing jobs.

But governments are flashing clear signs that the synthetics work well enough.

New Hampshire and Indiana each banned their sale for the purposes of subverting drug tests.

And Washington’s bureaucracy is working now on standards for other kinds of drug tests that use oral fluids or snippets of hair for inclusion in the federal drug testing program that currently requires urine-based testing.

Beat the system

Despite the product names, packaging for synthetic urine seeks to deflect from the widespread use of the kits to beat drug tests.

Box fronts proclaim the products are intended for research or novelty purposes. Smaller print insists the products are intended for lawful use only.

UPass has been labeled “synthetic urine.” But the package purchased at 7-Eleven is labeled as a “fetish urine.”

Inside the box, it’s a different story.

Bottles of synthetic urine come with a temperature sensing strip attached. These match the temperature strips on the specimen cups test takers fill inside bathrooms at collect

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Temperature matters. Urine specimens that measure hotter than 100 degrees or cooler than 90 degrees are rejected outright as a sign of subversion. UFail, not UPass.

“It’s not physically possible — unless you have a fever — for your urine to come out above 100,” said Jonathan Colvin, a lab technician at ARCpoint Labs in Overland Park.

Some instructions tell users to microwave the bottle for 10 seconds. Kits typically contain hand warmers to keep the sample at temperature until the test.

Then there is Monkey Whizz, sold by a company called Serious Monkey Business.

“DO NOT MICROWAVE” tops the instruction sheet. This product relies on two hand warmers with adhesive backing to help warm the sample.

Monkey Whizz also comes in a pouch, not a bottle, attached to a belt. It’s a simple cotton elastic band intended to go under clothing, pressing the pouch containing synthetic urine against the body’s warmth. And, of course, out of sight.



A Monkey Whizz kit includes an elastic belt, hand warmers and a temperature-sensitive strip on the pouch of synthetic urine.

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These and other kits are w  
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...sites such as Drug  
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Fumbling around nervously and making too much noise can lead to specimen rejection. Sinclair said he's heard of test takers leaving the hand warmers, product packaging and vials of fake urine in the bathroom at a collection site.

So a bit of practice helps. As does transporting the fake urine with the regular cap in place rather than the "flip top" cap.

ARCPoint Chief Operating Officer John Constantine saw why the cap matters during a recent urine collection session for trainees at the company's headquarters.

"All of a sudden, a puddle started showing up under this donor, right in the lobby," Constantine said. "That donor just walked right out."

## Beat the cheats

From the other side of the battle, synthetic urine gets real attention.

Specimen collection sites require test takers to empty the contents of their pockets before going into a bathroom to fill the cup. Purses go in a locker, too. If a bottle of synthetic urine happens to show up, fine. Just so it goes in the locker.

Test takers also must wash their hands while a lab employee watches. This battles efforts to spoil a specimen, perhaps with soap hidden beneath finger nails or bleach on a finger. This can buy time for a later test, after the body has rid itself of evidence.

Colvin said he rarely witnesses outright subterfuge, though once he saw a bottle fall from one woman's pocket after providing a specimen. Her urine sample also tested out as too hot.

"Sorry. You need to go," Colvin said he told the woman.

Once that bottle of synthetic makes it into the bathroom, a test subject is halfway home. The door shuts and the specimen provider is alone. If the sample emerges at the right temperature it most likely is accepted for testing.

Some collection practices go further to spot synthetics. Someone watches.

Observed tests are mandated by courts in probation cases, by child protection services and for some Department of Transportation tests. These tests require partial nudity and sometimes a complete turn to ensure there are no belts or bottles holding a false specimen.

## Lenexa sniff test

Kevin Dyches said he could spot fake urine with an easy test. Call it a shake-and-sniff scrutiny.

Dyches should know. He makes synthetic urine in Lenexa.

His company is Dyna-Tek Industries Inc., which is in the process of changing its name to Synthetic Life Sciences. You won't find its products in a smoke shop or convenience store. Dyna-Tek serves clinics, researchers and some manufacturers.

Mattress makers, for example, have used Dyna-Tek's synthetic urine to answer a critical question: How many times can a kid wet the bed before the fire retardant treatment fails?

Shaking a sample can expose fake pee because real urine contains protein, which bubbles when agitated. Synthetic urine lacks protein, he said.

Sniffing works because urine contains odor-producing bacteria that multiplies the longer a sample is outside the body. Synthetic doesn't.

Shake and sniff might detect synthetic urine but won't stop cheating at the collection site. Foam and odor aren't part of the process.

At the lab, however, there is a sniff test, says Christopher Tarpey, general manager of eScreen Inc. in Kansas City. Toxicologists will lend a nose if other red flags have made a specimen suspicious.


eScreen developed stand-alone drug screening machines that rely on the same technology as home pregnancy tests. It's a machine about the size of a small, single-serving coffee maker.

In addition to testing for drugs, labs look at a sample's pH level and for its specific gravity that measures how much particulates are in the fluid.


And they test for creatinine. Muscles create it, and predictable amounts flush out through urine.

"There are synthetics on th

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Kits purchased for this report did not mention creatinine. Instead, they touted inclusion of uric acid or urea, substances that Tarpey said typically are not part of urine validity testing.

Legal limits

Synthetic urine has its limits. It’s illegal in at least two states.

A ban in New Hampshire on the sale and possession of synthetic urine began Jan. 1 this year. Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb signed a ban that took effect July 1. It provided that the distribution of synthetic urine “with the intent to assist a person in defrauding a drug screen is a misdemeanor.”

The trucking industry tries to keep synthetic urine kits out of truck stops, and a check found no kits at truck stops on opposite sides of Interstate 70 in Oak Grove.

Besides, employers are moving toward other kinds of drug tests that are easier to administer and can be less intrusive for the target of the test. Some of these use a swab to collect oral fluids for drug use detection.

Hair as a drug detection medium is growing among companies that employ truck drivers, said Potter of the trucking association.

Synthetics also have a new problem.

Marker Test Diagnostics sells UR Code, a liquid containing markers that flush out of the body in about a half hour. Specimen collectors watch the test subject consume the liquid, and the lab checks to see that the urine sample matches the marker taken.

The company calls its marker a bar code for pee. And why not? Pee already is available near cash registers.

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