

# Fingerprint test for cocaine could be used by employers

◆ A fingerprint test that can detect if a person has used cocaine within 30 seconds could transform the fight against drug-driving and drug abuse at work, scientists have said.

The technique, developed by researchers at the University of Surrey, can pick up traces of the substance even after subjects have washed their hands.

It uses chromatograph paper to take a fingerprint sample which is then automatically analysed using mass spectrometry.

Police are currently relying on "drug-wipe" tests as well as laborious blood, urine or hair testing procedures back at the station.

The method, reported in the journal *Clinical Chemistry*, claims 99 per cent accuracy, is non-invasive and far quicker than any rival. The team behind it say the technology could be used to fight workplace drug abuse. They are hoping to work with the NHS to pilot its use in hospitals, where an early indication if a patient has taken drugs can be vital.

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