COUNTERFEIT MONEY DETECTOR

Identify bogus bills with iodine.

THE SETUP
The U. S. government tries to make money that is difficult to counterfeit beginning with the paper it is printed on. Perfect replicas of the design are easy to make with a high-tech color copier, but it’s impossible for counterfeiters to duplicate the special paper.

You will need:
• A cotton swab
• Iodine
• American paper currency
• Assortment of other paper

Your medicine cabinet is the source of a test that quickly identifies most fake bills. Dip a cotton swab in the iodine. Touch it to paper money. The iodine will make a dull orange mark if the money is genuine. It will turn black on fake money and on other kinds of paper.

INSIDER INFORMATION
Iodine turns black in the presence of a starch. Most paper contains starch, which adds bulk and holds the wood fibers together. The paper used for U. S. currency is mostly made of linen fibers, which cling together without any starch.

People who handle large amounts of cash are always on the lookout for counterfeits. To detect bogus bills, they mark them with a special pen that contains iodine ink. These pens can be purchased at office supply stores.

Money is being redesigned with many new safeguards to make a counterfeiter’s life miserable. The paper used in ten-dollar bills and larger denominations is now manufactured with an embedded Mylar strip that has the value of the bill printed on it. In new one-hundred dollar bills, this strip is fluorescent and glows under ultraviolet light.