

BHS MEDICAL ASSESSMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Q-1: Why do I need to take a medical exam?

A-1: The job of a firefighter is physically demanding. For this reason, the Bureau of Health Services (BHS) conducts a physical and mental health assessment, sometimes also referred to as a “medical exam” or “medical assessment,” of each candidate to determine whether the candidate can safely fulfill the requirements of the job.

Q-2: When will my medical exam take place?

A-2: Your medical exam is part of processing for each Academy class. Typically, it takes place during the six month period prior the beginning of an Academy class. When you are called to meet with your investigator you will know that the FDNY has begun processing you for the next Academy class. You will not be called to take a medical exam until your number has been reached on the list for processing for an Academy class.

Scheduling for medical exams is done by the Candidate Investigation Division (CID). In general, you will be scheduled for your BHS appointment about one month after your visit to CID. If you anticipate any scheduling issues during this period of time, you can bring them to the attention of your CID investigator. If, after you have received your BHS appointment letter, you discover that you need to change the date of the BHS appointment, you can contact CID via email at CID@fdny.nyc.gov. CID will send you a letter with your new appointment date.

Q-3: I just passed the CPAT; do I need to do anything to prepare for the medical exam?

A-3: Preparation for your medical exam should begin as early as possible. If you are overweight, you should allow for a reasonable time to lose weight. You did not gain extra weight overnight; you cannot lose extra weight overnight. Take the time to lose the weight in a healthy way so you can keep the weight off. We strongly encourage you to consult with your medical services provider before assuming a weight loss regiment.

Physical conditioning for firefighting is important. Preparing for the CPAT examination will help you prepare for your medical assessment, but the CPAT and the medical exam are not the same tests.

Also, while it is rare, a period of 6 to 12 months can pass between the date of your CPAT and the date of your BHS appointment. You want to be in shape, and are encouraged to stay in shape, to pass the medical exam when you are called for it.

Q-4: What should I do to physically prepare for the medical exam?

A-4: First, you should familiarize yourself with the elements of the medical exam so you know what will be required of you. Read the [BHS Guidance Document](#) for a description of each portion of the medical exam and watch the [video](#) that will provide an overview of the medical exam.

As you will see in the video, the stairmill test is not like a stairmaster you might find at a gym. Practicing on a stairmill similar to the one used for your medical exam is important. Practicing can help assure that you don't fail because of lack of familiarity with the equipment.

Aerobic activity and strength building are both critical. In addition to lifting weights to improve your strength you must improve your cardiac capacity by including in your exercise routine exercises like running, biking, or stair climbing to get fit.

Practice healthy habits: Stay hydrated with water and eat a balanced diet with protein, whole grains, vegetables, nuts, and fruits. It is not advisable or necessary, however, to pile on vitamins, protein shakes, and protein supplements.

Q-5: I just had an annual checkup that didn't turn up any issues. Can I just provide the results of the checkup?

A-5: No. Regardless of your own doctor's assessment of your overall health, the FDNY must conduct its own evaluation of your physical fitness for the job of Firefighter. While your doctor probably performed some elements of the medical exam (measuring your height, weight and blood pressure) it is unlikely that your doctor performed the other tests that are part of the medical exam.

The nature of firefighting demands that the FDNY conduct thorough medical exams of all candidates to evaluate a candidate's physical fitness for the job. If a firefighter has a medical problem while responding to a fire it may be difficult or impossible to provide timely medical attention. When a firefighter is incapacitated while responding to a fire, members of the public and other firefighters may be put in danger.

Q-6: Is the medical exam completed in a single day?

A-6: No. The medical exam will take place during three separate (but not consecutive) days that could potentially span a period of 6 to 12 months, or longer if a medical condition has been identified that requires additional follow up.

PHYSICAL EXAM: During one day, you will be asked to complete a set of forms, including the Candidate Medical Assessment Form, and visit twelve stations. All these forms may be

accessed [here](#), although nearly all forms must be completed on the day of your medical exam. A video describing the BHS Exam may be viewed [here](#). Some people pass the tests taken during the physical exam on the first attempt, but many people do not.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EXAM: About one month before or after the Medical Exam, you will also be required to complete the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), which consists of a series of true/false questions. You will also complete a “Biographical Data Sheet.” The Biographical Data Sheet, the results of the MMPI, and any other documentation completed by you will be reviewed by BHS personnel. If it is determined as a result of that review that you may not be able to safely perform the job of a Firefighter, a “Reserved Medical Status” letter (see [Q-28 and A-28](#)) will be issued and you will be scheduled to meet in person with a BHS mental health professional.

TIMED RUN: If you pass both the physical and psychological components of the Medical Assessment and assuming that you are otherwise qualified, you will be scheduled for a timed run that takes place at the FDNY Fire Academy shortly before you would be appointed as a probationary Firefighter. You will be required to run 1.5 miles in 13 minutes or less.

Q-7: What happens on the day of the Physical Exam?

A-7: You fill out and submit medical forms; and you will complete twelve stations, which are described in more detail [below](#) and can be viewed [here](#).

Q-8: What happens at the end of the Physical Exam?

A-8: If you have a medical issue that requires follow up, you will be given a Reserved Medical Status letter. BHS may require the results of diagnostic testing. For *some* types of diagnostic testing, BHS may even offer the testing at no cost to you, and BHS can schedule you on the date of your BHS visit for a future diagnostic test.

If there is no medical issue that requires follow up, you will be contacted by CID regarding any other requirement concerning your candidacy for the position of Firefighter. Assuming that all requirements for hiring have been met, you will be scheduled for the timed run.

Q-9: Can I see the forms I will have to fill out?

A-9: Yes, the forms are available [here](#). However, most of these forms must be completed during your visit to BHS. A BHS representative will describe these forms to you on the day of the Physical exam.

It is important that you provide complete and accurate information on all forms. Your answers to the questions on the forms will be used by BHS during the medical assessment and will assist

BHS in determining whether you are medically fit for appointment as a firefighter.

Q-10: Does the FDNY use any national standards for the medical exam?

A-10: For many parts of the medical exam, the FDNY has adopted a standard published by the National Fire Protection Association, also known as the NFPA.

Q-11: I have one or more medical conditions or issues. Will they disqualify me from becoming a firefighter?

A-11: Maybe. BHS evaluates candidates on an individualized basis. What may be a medically satisfactory result for one candidate for a specific evaluation may not be a satisfactory result for another candidate, depending on the candidate's overall health picture and the severity of the specific condition. For that reason, BHS cannot tell you in advance if any condition(s) will result in disqualification. Often when candidates have potentially disqualifying conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and certain heart and orthopedic conditions, they may be referred for additional testing. You will be told whether additional testing is required and whether it is offered as no cost to you. For further information please see [BHS Guidance Document](#).

Some candidates may receive a Notice of Proposed Medical Disqualification because they have a condition that cannot be immediately resolved. If you receive this notice, please carefully read it. You may have a condition that can be resolved over time, and you may be able to temporarily decline being considered for appointment (this will remove you from consideration for the Academy class for which you were being considered) and ask to be restored to the eligibility list once your condition is resolved (you would be considered for a subsequent Academy class). Instructions on how to decline being considered for appointment will be found on the Notice of Proposed Medical Disqualification.

Q-12: I take prescription drugs for one or more medical conditions or issues. Will they disqualify me from becoming a firefighter?

A-12: Maybe. BHS evaluates candidates on an individualized basis. What may be a medically satisfactory result for one candidate for a specific evaluation may not be a satisfactory result for another candidate, depending on the candidate's overall health picture and the severity of the specific condition. For that reason, BHS cannot tell you in advance if any prescriptions will result in disqualification.

If your doctor has prescribed a medication for you that poses a problem for your candidacy, the FDNY may be able to identify possible alternative medication(s) to discuss with your physician. However, only your physician can make the determination as to which medication is best for your health.

Q-13: Who do I contact if I require a reasonable accommodation due to a disability or my religion?

A-13: If you require a reasonable accommodation due to a disability or because of your religion in order to complete the BHS medical assessment, please contact the FDNY EEO Office at 718-999-1446, 1447 or 1448.

Q-14: What should do if I have additional questions or concerns regarding my medical status?

A-14: It depends. If you have a medical condition that requires follow up, BHS will notify you of the condition in writing in a Reserved Medical Status letter. If you are scheduled by BHS for an appointment, you will also be notified in writing, and instructions for re-scheduling will be included. Also, if you are sent a Notice of Proposed Medical Disqualification or a Final Notice of Medical Disqualification, you should carefully read those notices as they contain important instructions.

However, BHS does not treat medical conditions and does not provide guidance on how certain medical conditions should be corrected so that you are medically cleared for hiring as a Firefighter.

BHS might identify a condition that may be corrected so that you are medically cleared for hiring, or BHS might identify a condition that can permanently disqualify a candidate from being hired as a Firefighter. If a medical condition that requires treatment is identified (for example, obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes), we strongly encourage you to contact your medical services provider so that you may pursue an appropriate course of treatment.

Q-15: Where do I take the Medical Exam?

A-15: Most components of the FDNY Medical Exam will take place at BHS, located at FDNY Headquarters, 9 MetroTech Center, Second Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201. Should any component of the medical exam not take place at BHS, you will be notified of the location in writing.

Q-16: How long is the Physical Exam? Should I bring my lunch?

A-16: You will be required to arrive at BHS at 6:45 AM on the date of your appointment. In general, the physical exam can take about 5 ½ hours, although the amount of time may vary from candidate to candidate. Only a light breakfast is recommended, as the stairmill test involves aerobic exercise and you will be subject to blood testing. We do recommend that you bring your own bottled water and a light snack that you can consume after the blood work station. We do not recommend that you bring your lunch.

Q-17: Do I need to be clean shaven for the Physical Exam?

A-17: Your face must be clean shaven for the Physical Exam. In general, you may not have a beard, moustache, or facial hair of any kind. This is necessary so that you can maintain a proper seal on the mask as part of the Physical Exam.

Q-18: What do I wear for the Physical Exam? Is there a place to change?

A-18: You should bring or wear sneakers and comfortable gym clothing, in anticipation of the stairmill test. If candidates need to change clothing they may use the restroom.

Q-19: Is secured storage available?

A-19: No. There are no secure locker facilities available for candidates. You may place any personal items that you bring with you in a gym or duffel bag and these will be kept in a training room at BHS. You may place a lock on you bag. You are strongly discouraged from bringing valuables such as jewelry, and may be required to remove certain jewelry if it impedes any portion of the medical assessment. You will be permitted to retrieve your bag upon completing your medical assessment.

When you arrive at FDNY Headquarters, you and your belongings will be subject to security screening. You will not be permitted to enter the building with any firearm, or sharps object such as a pocketknife, multi-purpose tool, swiss army knife, or scissors.

Q-20: Can I eat breakfast on the day of the Physical exam?

A-20: You may eat a light breakfast, but you are strongly encouraged to not eat one hour prior to your appointment. Bear in mind that your blood will subject to testing. Bring snacks, such as a granola bar or fruit, and bottled water with you. You should eat any snack that you bring only after completing the blood work station.

You should not consume tonic water, quinine water or other quinine product, or any poppy seed product.

You are not allowed to take stimulants such as Red Bull or other high energy drinks at least 24 hours before any part of the Medical Exam.

Q-21: Is there anything I need to bring with me for the Physical Exam?

A-21: You must bring:

- The letter from CID (notice of attendance)

- A completed, signed and notarized Medical Disclosure Form. This form will be given to you prior to the date of the BHS Physical Exam. You may review the form [here](#).
- A valid government photo ID (Examples: NYS Department of Motor Vehicles ID or Driver's License, or US Passport)
- Your eyeglasses or contact lenses – you will be allowed to wear them to take the vision testing
- If you are on medication, a list of your prescriptions or the prescription bottles themselves
- If you are under the care of a medical provider, a note outlining diagnosis, medications, and treatment plan (for example for diabetes or hypertension) or any other medical records you feel might be helpful
- If you have had orthopedic procedures or surgeries, an operative note and any other medical documentation.
- Immunization records (vaccination records) – if available
- A pen for writing.

If you bring any medical records, we will make copies on site so that you can keep your original copies.

Q-22: Can someone accompany me during any part of the Medical Exam?

A-22: No. You are not permitted to bring anyone with you for any part of the medical exam.

Q-23: I've become ill or have suffered an injury prior to the Physical exam, and I feel I cannot proceed with the exam as scheduled. What can I do?

A-23: You may write to CID at CID@fdny.nyc.gov to re-schedule your exam. Depending on the matter that you have reported, you may be required to bring medical documentation on the date of your Physical exam.

Q-24: I've become ill during the Physical exam. What should I do?

A-24: If you feel sick or uncomfortable and don't think you can complete the physical exam, you must let a Fire Officer know so he/she can give you directions for rescheduling. Fire Officers are in uniform and wear white shirts.

If you have started and are not able to complete the Stairmill Test, you will be re-scheduled for a Second Stairmill Test. Please read the [BHS Guidance Document](#), for further instructions regarding the Stairmill Test.

Q-25: Can I have my cell phone with me during the medical exam?

A-25: All electronic devices that you bring must be turned off during your medical exam. You are strongly encouraged to keep them in the gym or duffel bag that you bring with you.

Q-26: Will I know if I passed the medical exam the same day?

A-26: No. A BHS physician must review the results from each station (including laboratory results which are generally available within one week of the BHS Medical Assessment) before a decision can be made, so they cannot advise you of your results the same day.

Q-27: How will I find out my results?

A-27: If BHS determines that you are medically qualified, you will be contacted by CID regarding any other condition for hiring that you are still required to fulfill. If you have fulfilled all conditions for hiring, CID will schedule you for the timed run.

Q-28: I received a “Reserved Medical Status” letter. What does this mean? What happens if I do not respond, or do not respond fully?

A-28: Where a candidate has a medical condition or status that will medically disqualify him or her from appointment, BHS will, in general, give the candidate the opportunity to correct the condition or status and/or provide documentation acceptable to BHS showing that the candidate can safely fulfill the job of a firefighter.

In that event, you will receive a “Reserved Medical Status” letter, also sometimes called a “Reserved Status” letter, which will inform you of any medical condition or status that needs to be addressed prior to appointment. In general, candidates will be given a period of **30 days** from the date of the Reserved Status letter to address the condition or status described in the Reserved Status letter. If you do not submit follow up information within 30 days you will be sent a Notice of Proposed Medical Disqualification.

Please note that in general, extensions to the 30 day requirement are not granted. **If you get a Reserved Medical Status letter, please read it carefully and follow instructions.**

Please note that in certain circumstances BHS will determine that a candidate’s medical condition or status is so severe and/or that the candidate’s overall medical status is such that the candidate will be medically disqualified from appointment as a firefighter, without the need for further follow up. When this happens a candidate does not get a Reserved Medical Status

letter. Instead, he/she receives a different document, called a Notice of Proposed Medical Disqualification (NOPMD).

More details about the Reserved Medical Status letter and the NOPMD are available in the [BHS Guidance Document](#).

Q-29: I received a “Notice of Proposed Medical Disqualification,” what does this mean?

A-29: A Notice of Proposed Medical Disqualification, or NOPMD, means that BHS has reached a tentative conclusion that you are not medically qualified to be a firefighter. This, however, is not a final decision. If you receive a NOPMD you will still have 30 days from the date of the NOPMD to respond. **Please carefully read the NOPMD and follow any instructions.**

Q-30: I have received a NOPMD and I need more time to respond. What can I do?

A-30: If you need more time to respond to the NOPMD, please follow the instructions contained in the NOPMD. You will be informed in writing whether additional time has been granted.

If the medical exam identifies a condition that takes more than 30 days to address, you can temporarily decline being considered for appointment (this will remove you from consideration for the Academy class for which you were being considered) and ask to be restored to the eligibility list once your condition is resolved (you would be considered for a subsequent Academy class). The NOPMD will provide instructions on how decline being considered for appointment.

Q-31: What is the Candidate Medical Assessment Form?

A-31: The Candidate Medical Assessment Form is one of the forms you will be asked to fill out on the date of your first BHS appointment. The Candidate Medical Assessment Form asks a number of questions about your medical history, including whether you currently take or have taken certain medications, or whether you currently have, or have a history of, certain:

- conditions;
- illnesses;
- medical procedures; or
- medical statuses.

The Candidate Medical Assessment Form also has space for you to provide additional information about any of the above, including whether you received medical treatment for the medical matters that you have reported.

Q-32: Will I automatically be disqualified if I disclose that I had (or have) a specific illness, condition, or medical procedure?

A-32: No. You will **not** be automatically disqualified from appointment as a firefighter just because you disclose that you had (or have) a specific illness, condition, or medical procedure. Instead, this will be evaluated on an individual basis together with your medical history and results of the medical exam.

However, if you fail to disclose medical information or a condition that is being asked about on the Medical Assessment Form, you could be disqualified from appointment.

Q-33: Will I automatically be disqualified if I disclose that I was certified as disabled by the US Department of Veterans Affairs?

A-33: You must disclose whether you were certified as disabled by the US Department of Veterans Affairs. However, you will **not** be automatically disqualified from appointment as a firefighter just because you disclose that you were certified as disabled by the US Department of Veterans Affairs. Instead, this will be evaluated on an individual basis together with your medical history and results of the medical exam.

Q-34: Will I automatically be disqualified if I disclose that I was medically disqualified from service by another employer?

A-34: You must disclose whether you were medically disqualified from service by another employer. However, you will **not** be automatically disqualified from appointment as a firefighter just because you disclose that you were medically disqualified by another employer. Instead, this will be evaluated on an individual basis together with your medical history and results of the medical exam.

THE MEDICAL STATIONS

Q-35: What stations will I be asked to visit on the day of the Physical exam?

A-35: On the day of the Physical Exam, you will visit the following 12 stations:

- Vital Signs
- Electrocardiogram (EKG)
- Pulmonary Function Test
- Routine Laboratory Test
- Cardio Pulmonary Fitness Evaluation (Stairmill Test)
- Laboratory Test for Unauthorized Substances
- Immunization/PPD

- Hearing
- Vision
- Chest X-Ray
- Face Piece Fitting
- BHS Physician Evaluation

Q-36: What happens at each station?

A-36: More details on each station are provided below. In general, however, at each station, one or more medical tests will be administered. A health assessment technician doing the testing will sign off, indicating you have completed that station. As you complete each station, you will be directed to the next station by BHS personnel.

Q-37: What could disqualify me at each station?

A-37: Each candidate is evaluated on an individual basis, so BHS cannot provide a complete list of what will disqualify candidates. For each station, however, we have provided below some of the test results that may require further evaluation. Depending on the results of that further evaluation (including the severity of any condition) a particular candidate may be disqualified. This FAQ document lists conditions which have been commonly identified. However, we have not exhausted the list of conditions that may disqualify candidates.

Q-38: In what order will I visit the stations?

A-38: There is no set order in which you will visit the BHS stations. In general, however, BHS staff will ensure that:

- you visit the Vital Signs, Electrocardiogram (EKG), and Pulmonary Function stations before the Cardiopulmonary Fitness Evaluation (Stairmill Test) station
- you visit the Routine Laboratory Test station after the Stairmill Station
- you do not visit the Hearing station immediately after the Stairmill station
- the BHS Physician Evaluation is usually the last station you visit

Q-39: Will I be told if I pass at each station?

A-39: On the day of your visit, BHS personnel will not tell you whether you “passed” a specific BHS station. This is because a BHS physician must review the results from each station (including laboratory results which are not immediately available) before any determination can be made.

Q-40: Can I see someone going through the medical exam so I know what to expect?

A-40: BHS has put together a video which goes through the elements of the medical exam. That video has been posted [here](#).

THE VITAL SIGNS STATION

Q-41: What is tested at the Vital Signs station?

A-41: At the Vital Signs station the following is measured:

- Blood pressure;
- Pulse rate;
- Height;
- Weight;
- Oxygen saturation.

Q-42: What are some Vital Signs test results that may require further evaluation?

A-42: Among other results, the following may require additional follow up:

- Systolic blood pressure equal to or exceeding 140 (mmHG);
- Diastolic blood pressure equal to or exceeding 90 (mmHG);
- Weight exceeding the upper limit of your ideal weight by greater than 20 percent (see the [BHS Guidance Document](#) for a table of ideal weights);
- Body Mass Index (BMI) equal to or exceeding 30; and
- Heart rate (pulse) equal to or greater than 100 beats per minute.

Q-43: How do I determine my ideal weight?

A-43: When making a medical qualification determination, BHS generally refers to Appendix C of the [BHS Guidance Document](#). However, we recommend that you consult with your medical services provider regarding what should be your ideal weight. You should consider temporarily declining from being considered for appointment. [See Q-11 and A-11.](#)

THE ELECTROCARDIOGRAM STATION

Q-44: What is tested at the Electrocardiogram (EKG) station?

A-44: An EKG measures heart rate, heart rhythm, and heart patterns.

Q-45: How is the EKG conducted?

A-45: While you are lying down, a Health Assessment Technician (HAT) will place a set of ten adhesive pads on your chest, arms and legs. These pads are connected by wire to an

electrocardiogram monitor. You may be required to remove any clothing that would interfere with the EKG, including clothing that covers the chest area. A half gown will be provided if you request one. You will be permitted to wear undergarments as long as your undergarments don't interfere with the EKG.

Q-46: What are some EKG test results that may require further evaluation?

A-46: Among other results, a deviation from a normal heart rate and/or a normal sinus rhythm may require additional follow up.

PULMONARY FUNCTION TEST STATION

Q-47: What does this test entail? What is tested at the Pulmonary Function Test (PFT) station?

A-47: You will be instructed to exhale as hard as possible, a total of up to eight times. The three best results will be recorded as your results. Your capacity to forcibly exhale air in one second which is measured by the spirometer against certain predicted values. See the [BHS Guidance Document](#). The spirometer tests your ability to expand your lungs and breathe out a full breath (Forced Vital Capacity) and the speed at which the air comes out (forced expiratory volume in first second of expiration).

Q-48: What PFT results may require further evaluation?

A-48: Further evaluation will be required if your capacity to forcibly exhale (FVC) and forcibly exhale air in one second (FEV1) is less than 80 percent of the predicted value for your height, gender and race or if the ratio of these two measures (FEV1/FVC) is less than 0.70.

Q-49: Why does my ethnicity matter for this Test?

A-49: Differences in lung capacity, based on race, have been recorded by the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (1988–1994) (NHANES III).

ROUTINE LABORATORY TEST STATION

Q-50: What is tested at the Routine Laboratory Test station?

A-50: At the Routine Laboratory Test station, blood and urine samples are collected. These samples are then tested by a third party. The tests that are run include:

- Cell Blood Counts (CBC): this measures red/white blood counts and platelet counts.
- A comprehensive medical profile of your blood that measures, sugar (glucose), kidney function, liver function, electrolytes, calcium levels, lipid profiles, and cholesterol/triglycerides.
- Urinalysis: this checks your urine for protein, blood cells, and sugar (glucose).
- Viral titers: this looks for immunity to measles/mumps/rubella/chickenpox/hepatitis B and hepatitis C. If you are not immune, vaccination for measles, mumps and rubella is required once you are hired. BHS also offers firefighters optional vaccinations for chicken pox and Hepatitis B.

The FDNY tests for unauthorized substances separately. For information on the test for unauthorized substances, see [below](#).

Q-51: What are some Routine Laboratory test results that may require further evaluation?

A-51: Among other results, the following may require you to get evaluated further:

- Abnormal red and/or white blood cell count;
- Abnormal blood or urine glucose;
- Elevated levels of serum creatinine; and
- Elevated liver function.

Q-52: Is it a problem if I take certain medication?

A-52: Even with a legal prescription, the chronic use of certain categories of substances may be incompatible with the job of a firefighter. These categories include, but may not be limited to: opiates, pain medications, anti-psychotic medications, sedatives, sleeping pills, beta blockers and anti-coagulants.

A positive test for one of these types of substances will require further evaluation. Candidates will be reviewed on an individualized basis, and BHS may have the candidate provide a prescription history, an explanation for the prescription, and an opinion as to how long the prescription will be continued from the prescribing physician. You will be required to report medications that you are taking, and your failure to report a medication could result in your disqualification.

CARDIOPULMONARY FITNESS STATION

Q-53: What is tested at the Cardiopulmonary Fitness (Stairmill) Test Station?

A-53: Your aerobic capacity. At the Cardiopulmonary Fitness Test station you will be asked to complete two separate phases on a stairmill machine, which is often referred to as the “stairmill test.” This will be done to measure your aerobic capacity, which is your body’s ability to take in oxygen and perform work. Firefighting requires at least 12 METs of aerobic capacity.

Q-54: Must I pass an examination before I can take the Stairmill test?

A-54: Before you can begin the stairmill test, a nurse will review your completed Candidate Medical Assessment Form and the results from the Vital Signs, EKG, and Pulmonary Function Test stations to check for any medical conditions that may make it unsafe for you to proceed with the stairmill test. Such conditions may include:

- A systolic blood pressure exceeding 140 (mmHg) or a diastolic blood pressure exceeding 90 (mmHg);
- An irregular heartbeat;
- A bone fracture that occurred within the last 12 months;
- The chronic use of prescribed medication including, but not limited to, blood thinners, beta blockers, sedatives, and narcotics;
- A history of heart disease, including a heart stent;
- A history of stroke;
- Morbid obesity;
- Recent surgery; or
- A history of pulmonary disease.

Q-55: What happens if the nurse who reviews my information determines that I should not proceed with the stairmill test?

A-55: If the nurse, in his/her medical opinion, believes that you should not proceed with the stairmill test, you will be verbally notified that you may not take the stairmill test until a BHS physician reviews your condition(s) and/or medical test result(s). In that case, a BHS physician will examine you and review the medical test results and/or conditions, and make a decision about whether you can safely proceed with the stairmill test.

Q-56: If a BHS physician determines that it would be unsafe for me to take the stairmill test on the day of the medical exam, may I take the stairmill test another time?

A-56: If a BHS physician determines that it would be unsafe for you to take the stairmill test, you will either be permitted to schedule another stairmill test or be asked to obtain additional testing to make sure that it is safe for you to take the stairmill test. You will be notified of what additional testing is needed in a “Reserved Medical Status” letter.

Q-57: What are the phases I must complete on the stairmill machine?

A-57: The stairmill test has two phases. During each phase, you will walk on the stairmill at the rate of one step per second. The test is given in the following manner:

- Phase One: Three minutes and two seconds (3:02).
- Five Minute Break.
- Phase Two: Five minutes and twelve seconds (5:12). During Phase Two, you will wear a 50 pound weighted vest.

Q-58: What determines if I pass or fail the stairmill test?

A-58. In addition to failing to complete the stairmill test, if any of the following occurs, the stairmill test will be discontinued and you will not be considered to have passed the test:

- Your heart rate exceeds certain maximum rates;
- You touch the stairmill with one or both of your hands; or
- BHS personnel observe signs of dizziness, distress or any condition which could cause harm to you.

Q-59: What are the heart rate limits for the stairmill test?

A-59: There are separate heart rate limits for the two phases of the stairmill test. More detail about these heart rate requirements can be found in the [BHS Guidance Document](#).

Q-60: If I fail the stairmill test or it is determined that it would be unsafe for me to take the stairmill test, can I still complete the other 11 stations?

A-60: You will be allowed to complete the remaining stations unless BHS has determined that it is not safe for you to continue with the other parts of the medical exam. The stairmill test (or an alternative that BHS advises is acceptable) must be successfully completed, however, before you can be appointed as a firefighter.

Q-61: May I take the stairmill test another time?

A-61: If you fail the stairmill test, you will be evaluated by a BHS physician. Based upon the physician's assessment you will either be permitted to schedule a retest or be asked to obtain additional testing to make sure that it is safe for you to retake the stairmill test. The additional testing needed would be conveyed in a "Reserved Medical Status" letter.

Q-62: If I am eligible to take the stairmill test a second time, how long will I have to schedule the test?

A-62: You will be scheduled for a second stairmill test to take place within 30 days of the first stairmill test.

Q-63: Is the second stairmill test the same?

A-63: The second stairmill test is largely the same as the first stairmill test, *except* that the test will be observed by a BHS physician and you may be eligible to take the “modified test.”

Q-64: What is the modified test?

A-64: If you are taking the second stairmill test and would have passed the retest except for your heart rate being too high, the BHS physician may, in his or her discretion, let you take the “modified test.” If this occurs you will be allowed to stay on the stairmill past the five minute and twelve second (5:12) mark at which phase two normally ends. If you are able to continue phase two for a full 8 minutes, then you will be considered to have passed the stairmill test.

Q-65: Can I take the stairmill test a third time?

A-65: You can only take the stairmill a third time if you obtain the results of a methacholine challenge test and an echocardiogram. The FDNY will cover the cost associated with these two tests. If you wish to have the FDNY schedule you for these tests at no cost to you, BHS will schedule you for these tests on the date of the second stairmill test. BHS will evaluate the result of those tests and if they are satisfactory, you will be allowed to take a third stairmill test.

Q-66: Why do I need to obtain a methacholine challenge test and an echocardiogram to take the third stairmill test?

A-66: If you failed the stairmill test twice, BHS must determine whether there are underlying conditions that may be preventing you from passing. Two potential underlying problems are asthma and structural heart disease. The methacholine challenge test is used to diagnose asthma and the echocardiogram tests for structural heart problems.

Q-67: Can I take a test other than the stairmill to be medically qualified?

A-67: If you fail the stairmill test twice and provide BHS with satisfactory results from a methacholine challenge test and an echocardiogram then you can submit the results of an outside test. To be accepted by BHS this test must be an exercise stress test to 12 METs.

LABORATORY TEST FOR UNAUTHORIZED SUBSTANCES STATION

Q-68: What is tested at the Laboratory Test for Unauthorized Substances station?

A-68: At this station you will be asked to provide a urine sample in a private space before a witness of your same gender. The sample will be sent to an outside laboratory, and will be tested for certain unauthorized substances.

Q-69: What are some test results that may disqualify me?

A-69: Any candidate who tests positive for an unauthorized substance not reported as a legal prescription to BHS (including, but not limited to, methadone, opiates, heroin, cocaine, barbituates, and benzodiazepine) will be sent a Notice of Proposed Medical Disqualification (NOPMD).

IMMUNIZATION/PPD STATION

Q-70: What is tested at the Immunization/PPD station?

A-70: At this station you will be tested for tuberculosis.

Q-71: What are some test results that may require further evaluation?

A-71: Signs of a latent or active tuberculosis infection require further evaluation.

Q-72: Does the TB test required future monitoring?

A-72: Yes. If you wish to have BHS confirm the results of your PPD Skin test at no cost to you, you may do so by visiting BHS on Monday through Friday, during the hours of 8:00 AM through 11:00 AM and 1:00 PM through 3:00 PM, and between 48 and 72 hours after the PPD Skin test is administered. You may have a licensed medical services provider of your choice confirm the results of the PPD skin test. Please see the instructions on [BHS Form 3B](#).

HEARING STATION

Q-73: What is the Hearing station?

A-73: At the Hearing station you will be placed in a sound proof booth and asked to identify different frequencies of sound transmitted through earphones.

Q-74: What are some test results that may require further evaluation?

A-74: Further evaluation will be required if the test results show that hearing loss in the unaided better ear is greater than 40 decibels (dB) at 500 Hz, 1000 Hz, 2000 Hz, and 3000 Hz.

VISION STATION

Q-75: What is the Vision station?

A-75: At this station an electronic vision screener is used to test for near sightedness, far sightedness, depth perception, color, and peripheral vision.

Q-76: What are some test results that may require further evaluation?

A-76: Among other results, the following may require additional follow up:

- Far vision acuity less than 20/40 binocular (even if corrected with lenses or spectacles);
- Monochromatic vision; and
- Monocular vision.

Q-77: I wear glasses or contact lenses, is that a problem?

A-77: By itself this is not a problem. If your glasses or contact lenses correct your vision enough so that you can pass the Vision station, you can be deemed medically qualified to become a firefighter.

Q-78: How is this different from the standard eye exam I have had before at the eye doctor?

A-78: A standard eye exam may be more involved than the BHS vision station. BHS is only assessing whether your vision is acceptable for appointment as Firefighter.

CHEST X-RAY STATION

Q-79: What is tested at the Chest X-Ray station?

A-79: At this station your chest will be x-rayed to test for problems with your heart, lungs, and spine.

Q-80: What are some test results that may require further evaluation?

A-80: Among other results, the following may require further evaluation:

- Evidence of pulmonary disease;
- Enlarged heart;
- Severe Scoliosis; and
- Use of a heart pacemaker that was not previously disclosed.

Q-81: If I am pregnant, am I required complete the X-ray station?

A-81: In general, X-Rays are not administered to pregnant women. If you are pregnant, you must report it on the Candidate Medical Disclosure form, and BHS may require documentation

from your OB/GYN. We strongly recommend that you discuss the BHS Medical Exam with your OB/GYN.

FACE PIECE FITTING STATION

Q-82: What is tested at the Face Piece Fitting station?

A-82: This station tests your ability to wear the breathing mask used to perform some firefighter duties.

Q-83: What are some test results that may require further evaluation?

A-83: Further evaluation will be required if you are unable to wear a face piece with a proper seal due to, for example, facial hair or facial deformity.

Q-84: What happens if I have facial hair?

A-84: Candidates must be able to maintain a proper seal in order to safely use a breathing mask. If the length of your facial hair does not permit a proper seal, you will not “pass” this station.

BHS PHYSICIAN EVALUATION STATION

Q-85: What happens at the BHS Physician Evaluation station?

A-85: At this station a BHS physician will review the data from the other stations and your Candidate Assessment Form, interview you, and conduct a physical examination. You should expect to briefly disrobe in a private room for the physical examination. Robes will be made available if requested by the candidate.

Q-86: What matters will be discussed with me at the Physician Station?

A-86: In general, the BHS physician will review with you the contents of the forms that you have completed and any results available from other stations. Any matters that require further evaluation will be discussed with you in addition to being noted in the Reserved Status letter. You will be given the opportunity to raise any issues with the BHS Physician.

Please note, however, that this is not a standard medical examination. BHS’s role is limited to determining whether you are medically qualified for hiring as a Firefighter. You are encouraged to schedule yourself for annual examinations with a medical services provider of your choice.

The BHS Physician will make a recommendation regarding whether you are medically qualified. BHS will not recommend what course of action you must adopt in order address an underlying medical issue that disqualifies you from appointment (e.g., diabetes, high cholesterol, obesity).

Also, even if you “passed” all prior stations, you will not be told whether you are medically qualified, as the results of labs tests will be pending.

Q-87: What are some test results that may require further evaluation?

A-87: If the BHS physician diagnoses any of the results listed in A-88 or notices another medical abnormality, such as a heart murmur, additional evaluation may be required.

FOLLOW UP ACTION THAT MAY BE REQUIRED OF ME

Q-88: I received a Reserved Medical Status letter that I have a medical condition that I was not previously aware of. What do I do?

A-88: BHS’S ROLE IS LIMITED TO DETERMINING WHETHER YOU ARE MEDICALLY QUALIFIED FOR APPOINTMENT. BHS IS NOT YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER. BHS IS NOT REQUIRED TO AND WILL NOT REPORT TO YOU ALL OF THE MEDICAL FOLLOW UP THAT YOU MAY REQUIRE, SUCH AS MEDICATIONS, SURGERY OR OTHER TREATMENT.

HOWEVER, BHS WILL REPORT ON THE RESERVED MEDICAL STATUS LETTER THOSE MEDICAL CONDITIONS THAT IT HAS OBSERVED THAT WILL MEDICALLY DISQUALIFY YOU FROM APPOINTMENT. IF YOU WISH TO BE HIRED AS A FIREFIGHTER, IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE ANY ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE MEDICAL CONDITIONS LISTED ON THE RESERVED MEDICAL STATUS LETTER, SO THAT YOU MAY BE MEDICALLY QUALIFIED FOR APPOINTMENT. IF A MEDICAL CONDITION IS REPORTED ON THE RESERVED MEDICAL STATUS LETTER, YOU ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO CONSULT WITH YOUR OWN MEDICAL SERVICES PROVIDER. IF YOU DISAGREE WITH THE CONDITION(S) STATED ON THE RESERVED MEDICAL STATUS LETTER, YOU MAY SUBMIT DOCUMENTATION TO BHS WITHIN THE DEADLINE STATED ON THE RESERVED STATUS LETTER.

WITH RESPECT TO SOME CONDITIONS, BHS WILL OFFER FREE DIAGNOSTIC TESTING TO CONFIRM SOME CONDITIONS, BUT NOT AS A FORM OF MEDICAL TREATMENT TO YOU. BHS WILL NOT PAY FOR ANY TREATMENT THAT YOU MAY REQUIRE TO CORRECT A MEDICAL CONDITION.

BELOW, WE HAVE LISTED CONDITIONS THAT HAVE BEEN REPORTED IN PRIOR RESERVED MEDICAL STATUS LETTERS AND THE TYPE OF FOLLOW UP THAT MAY BE REQUIRED. FOLLOW UP THAT IS REQUIRED WILL BE UNIQUE TO THE PARTICULAR CANDIDATE.

(a) Condition: Abnormal Blood Pressure

What BHS May Require:

- Documentation from your personal treating physician stating whether your blood pressure is typically normal or abnormal, whether medication is required, the name and dose of

the medication, and whether your blood pressure is now well controlled. The use of certain medications for abnormal blood pressure may not be appropriate for the job of a firefighter.

- The results of an echocardiogram, generally done to ensure that there is no heart damage. If these results are required, BHS will offer to schedule you for an echocardiogram at no cost to you.

(b) Condition: Abnormal Orthopedic Condition

What BHS May Require:

- The results of an X-ray. BHS will offer to schedule you for an X-ray at no cost to you.
- The results of an evaluation by an orthopedist. If this is required, BHS will schedule you for an appointment with a BHS orthopedist.

(c) Condition: Abnormal Electrocardiogram or a History of Heart Illness/Limitation

What BHS May Require:

- The results of a Holter Monitor. A Holter Monitor is a portable device that monitors and records your heart's electrical activity. You may be required to wear the Holter monitor for a 24 hour period, so that BHS gets the results that cover this period.
- The results of a stress test. If these results are required, BHS will offer to schedule you for a stress test at no cost to you.
- The results of an evaluation by a cardiologist. If this is required, BHS will schedule you for an appointment with a BHS cardiologist.

(d) Condition: Failure to Complete or to Meet Requirements of Pulmonary Function Test

What BHS May Require:

- The results of another pulmonary function test. If this is required, BHS will schedule you for another pulmonary function test.
- The results of a methacholine challenge test. If this is required, BHS will offer to schedule you for this test at no cost to you.
- The results of a chest CT scan. If this is required, BHS will offer to schedule you for this test at no cost to you.

- An evaluation by a pulmonologist. If this is required, BHS will schedule you for an appointment with a BHS pulmonologist.

(e) Condition: Abnormal Blood Glucose or History of Diabetes

What BHS May Require:

- The results of another blood test of your glucose level that tests for your hemoglobin A1C level. This testing will help determine if this is an isolated event or a sign of diabetes.

(f) Condition: Diabetes

What BHS May Require:

- A note from a physician outlining treatment as well as evidence of control over the last year. The note must specifically address hypoglycemic episodes, an ophthalmic (eye) exam showing no evidence of diabetic retinopathy, and kidney studies to ensure there is no renal disease. If you cannot provide evidence of control over the last year you may wish to consider temporarily declining being considered for appointment, which is described in more detail [here](#).

(g) Condition: Abnormal Kidney Function (Which May Include High Level of Creatinine in Blood)

What BHS May Require:

- The results of another blood test. If this is required, BHS will offer to schedule you for another test, at no cost to you.
- The results of a kidney ultrasound. If this is required, BHS will offer to schedule you at no cost to you.

(h) Condition: Abnormal Liver Function

What BHS May Require:

- The results of another blood test. If this is required, BHS will offer to schedule you for another test, at no cost to you.
- The results a medical evaluation to be conducted by to be conducted by a hepatologist or gastroenterologist.
- The results of a liver ultrasound. If this is required, BHS will offer to schedule you at no cost to you.

(i) Condition: Anemia (Low Red Blood Cell Count)

What BHS May Require:

- The results of another blood test, that will check for iron levels/hemoglobin electrophoresis. If this is required, BHS will offer to schedule you for another test, at no cost to you.
- Results of an evaluation by a hematologist, which you will be required to schedule at your own expense.

(j) Condition: Abnormal White Blood Cell Count

What BHS May Require:

- The results of another blood test that will specifically check for signs of infection or leukemia. If this is required, BHS will offer to schedule you for another test, at no cost to you.
- Results of an evaluation by a hematologist, which you will be required to schedule at your own expense.

(k) Condition: Low Blood Platelet Count

What BHS May Require:

- The results of another blood test that will specifically check for a bleeding disorder. If this is required, BHS will offer to schedule you for another test, at no cost to you.
- Results of an evaluation by a hematologist, which you will be required to schedule at your own expense.

(l) Condition: Obesity

What BHS May Require:

- Weight loss. Candidates must fall within the “Ideal Weight for FDNY Firefighter Candidates” found in Appendix C of the [BHS Guidance Document](#). We strongly recommended that you consult with your medical services provider before assuming any weight loss regiment.

Q-89: What Medical Follow Up Will BHS Pay For?

A-89: If required, BHS will schedule and pay to have the following tests conducted at no cost to you:

- Blood and/or Urine Testing (you may be instructed to fast (not eat) prior to providing a blood sample). These tests are often required for conditions such as: elevated blood sugar, diabetes, abnormal liver or kidney function, or abnormal cell counts such as low platelets.
- Full pulmonary function testing, a methacoline challenge test and/or a chest CT scan. These tests may be required if you show signs of certain pulmonary conditions, like asthma.
- Echocardiogram or stress test. These tests might be required if you show certain cardiac conditions, such as valve problems.
- Imaging (X-ray, CT or MRI scans) of the joint or bones. These tests might be required if you have certain orthopedic issues.

Q-90: Can I submit a letter from my Doctor stating that I am medically qualified for hiring as a Firefighter?

A-90: Yes. BHS will consider medical documentation and opinions from your Doctor. However, the decision as to whether you are medically qualified is solely BHS's, and we may disagree with your Doctor's opinion.