



Michael R. Bloomberg, *Mayor, City of New York*
Salvatore J. Cassano, *Fire Commissioner*

JUNE 2010

HEALTH CONNECTIONS



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BUREAU OF HEALTH SERVICES • COUNSELING SERVICES UNIT • FDNY

THE FDNY BHS WTC/ANNUAL MEDICAL EXAMINATION: IMPROVEMENTS

Each year, BHS tries to improve services to our active members to provide a positive encounter for members on their annual medical day. Let's review some of the changes that have been made to improve this interaction.

COMPUTERIZED QUESTIONNAIRES:

The computerized Medical and Psychological Questionnaire *now* focus on your *current* health concerns. Many members were concerned that there were too many questions about their 9/11 experience. Members felt that the questions focused on exposures and work experience at the site. These initial questions were designed to help us understand how our workforce was exposed. Once that information was obtained, there was no need to continue to ask these questions.

The current computer survey focuses on your health concerns *today and the last month*. If you are well, you will move along through these questions quickly. If you have active problems, there are more detailed questions that help the physician provide appropriate resources for these issues.

COMPUTERIZED MEDICAL CHART:

The continued computerization of the annual medical chart helps us cap-

ture new and old information. This information is available to the physician and will be reviewed with you. This way, you can see changes in patterns with your blood work, your breathing tests, your weight and blood pressure. You can see how your BMI (body mass index) is changing over time. (A change in your belt size is another clue!) An increase in BMI is associated with development of diabetes and elevated blood pressure. The body mass index helps stratify your health risks. This is your opportunity to review these important health results that impact on your well-being.

BHS ANNUAL BLOOD TESTS DELIVERED TO YOUR HOME:

Some time this summer, your computerized blood tests will be mailed directly to your home. This is another BHS initiative to improve your health and well-being. Comprehensive blood testing will continue to be performed either at Education day or at your Annual. Currently, this blood work is sent to members at their work site or given to members at the time of their annual, several months later. Unfortunately, many members place this blood work in their lockers and never follow up with their own healthcare providers.

This new initiative will ensure that members can review their blood work in their own homes. This change will allow members to take the time to

review their results, share their results with their health care provider and make life style changes, if indicated.

WHAT DOES THIS BLOOD WORK REALLY TEST FOR?

The annual blood work is comprehensive in nature and can help you assess your medical well-being and stratify your risks for future medical problems.

CBC: This is your blood count. It measures your white blood cells (WBC), cells that fight infection; red blood cells (RBC) that carry oxygen; and platelets (PLTS) that help with clotting. If the individualized counts show elevations or low counts, there could be medical issues that should be addressed. For example, a low RBC count could suggest anemia due to blood loss. An elevated WBC could represent an infection.

Comprehensive Metabolic Profile (CMP) are tests that measure the different blood chemicals.

The tests **BUN** and **CREATININE** measure kidney function.

Your **electrolytes – Sodium (NA), Potassium (K), Chloride (CHL), and Carbon Dioxide (CO2)** - provide information about your level of hydration, and kidney function.

GLUCOSE measures your sugar level. This is an important test in looking for diabetes.

Ideally, the fasting blood glucose is
(Continued on back page)

obtained on an empty stomach, with no eating or drinking for over 6 hours. The ideal glucose level is about 100 or less. If the fasting blood glucose is over 125, concern for diabetes is raised. Diabetes is a condition that is on the rise in our country. Several factors play a role including genetics (if you have a family member with diabetes), weight or body mass index (elevated weights increase your risk of diabetes), inactivity (the couch potato), infection or stress, age, and certain medications, like oral steroids. Look at your glucose and compare it to your prior numbers. If it is elevated, get it rechecked when fasting. Lifestyle changes will keep this illness in check.

The **liver enzymes, SGOT AND SGPT**, if elevated, suggest that the liver may be inflamed. This can be due to a number of reasons and should be investigated further by your medical care provider.

Serum Iron (FE) measures iron stored. It may be low in anemia and may represent blood loss. If elevated, it can represent over storage of iron which can cause toxicity to the liver, heart and muscles.

The **urinalysis** shows if there is protein in the urine. This may indicate that the kidneys are not filtering properly. Blood in the urine can be a sign of infection, kidney stones or cancer. Glucose in the urine is associated with

diabetes. WBC and RBC in the urine can indicate infection or inflammation that should be followed up on.

The **lipid profile: TOTAL CHOLESTEROL, HDL, LDL and Triglycerides** are measures of the body fats and can indicate a tendency to heart disease.

The total cholesterol should be at or below 200. The HDL is the good or protective cholesterol. This value should be above 40. The LDL is the bad cholesterol that correlates with plaque formation in the arteries. This number should be 100 or below.

Triglycerides are blood fats related more to total calories and starch especially sweets in the diet rather than fats. Alcohol will also increase this value. The ideal value is under 150. Elevations in triglycerides are often seen with elevation in blood glucose, and may suggest diabetic risk.

These numbers can be affected by diet and eating. Therefore on a non-fasting specimen, the results may not be as accurate, but could signify a trend that should be followed up.

These values are influenced by both genetics and food intake. Weight gain will increase these numbers. Changing diet to reduce total calorie intake, with reduction in fats and sugars and increasing daily activity are the first steps in changing these values. Sometimes medication is critical in reducing these numbers and reducing the risk of coronary disease.

PSA testing is a blood test done on males over the age of 40 years. This test may indicate enlargement or inflammation/infection or cancer in the prostate. The current range for normal results is .00 to 4.00. But the number and the velocity of change in that number over time remains an issue. With age, there can be a gradual rise in the number. However, a rapid change, greater than .5 to 1 in one year, can be associated with an underlying problem. Early detection

of prostate cancer or other prostate problems can be facilitated with this testing. Again, review your tests to look for a sudden upward shift that requires further evaluation.

Your annual medical examination gives you an opportunity to address your health concerns.

Medical problems can sometimes be silent in nature. Elevations in Blood Pressure can occur with aging, weight gain and changes in diet. If not addressed, these elevations can lead to organ damage – to the heart, the kidneys and the brain. Undetected diabetes, with persistently elevated glucose can also impact on your system.

The medical examination can help detect health problems that can be treated to prevent further problems.

Immunizations, such as tetanus, are offered to protect members.

Your health information should be shared with your medical health provider to review and discuss.

At certain ages, appropriate health maintenance testing is recommended.

Women should get mammograms done at prescribed intervals as well as PAP testing.

Men should have digital rectal examinations to evaluate the prostate over the age of 40.

Everyone should get colon screening. This can be done with colonoscopy recommended for those 50 or older and at younger ages if there is a family history of colon cancer or polyps or if symptomatic.

Maximize the value of your ANNUAL Medical Examination. Discuss with the BHS physician your results and how your health has changed in the last year.

STAY INFORMED, STAY SAFE

FDNY*BHS

9 MetroTech Center, Brooklyn
251 Lafayette Street, NY

Dr. Kerry Kelly
Chief Medical Officer

Dr. Viola Ortiz
Deputy Chief Medical Officer

Malachy Corrigan
Director, FDNY CSU

Mary T. McLaughlin
Director, FDNY BHS