

# HEALTH

# & FITNESS



## FIT FOR A PRESIDENT

*A Los Angeles clinic is providing patients with comprehensive physical exams as if the free world depended on their health. by JAMIE BECKMAN*

**M**OST GUYS LEAVE THEIR ANNUAL PHYSICALS feeling unfulfilled, and it has nothing to do with the rubber glove treatment. The yearly speed date with the doctor always raises one overwhelming question: Is the standard 15-minute cough-and-say-ah exam enough to diagnose any ticking time bombs inside your body? One Los Angeles-based clinic, Concierge Medicine L.A.,

doesn't think so, which is why this boutique medical organization, which treats many of Hollywood's elite, has begun offering clients the Presidential Physical, the very same extensive checkup that the president of the United States receives each year.

"We want to have a very high standard of care," says medical director Dr. Raphael Darvish. "Normal doctors' offices don't have the time to provide a detailed exam, because they're not reimbursed for it."



Concierge isn't typically reimbursed by insurance companies either (they regard the care as excessive), which is why patients have to shell out a cardiac arrest-inducing \$1,400 for the extra attention. The exam, which lasts an entire day, includes 40-plus tests and features radiation-free ultrasounds to ensure organs such as the heart and prostate are functioning properly, an eye exam, a full-body dermatological exam to check for cancer, a treadmill test to gauge cardiovascular function, and several obscure-sounding procedures like a fiber-optic nasolaryngoscopy, in which a tiny camera is inserted through the nose and aimed at your vocal cords to check for polyps (common in public speakers).

"We get to check everything that we're taught to check in medical school," says Darvish. "We also talk about wellness and strategies patients can implement in their life that will hopefully translate into a longer one." Examples of Darvish's helpful hints include recommending that patients take certain pain relievers on a full stomach (doing otherwise can cause ulcers) and request digital dental X-rays rather than standard ones to reduce radiation exposure by up to 80 percent.

Three separate general medicine doctors review your test results, compare opinions, reach a consensus, and offer their thoughts, essentially providing patients with second and third opinions right on the spot.

Getting an exhaustive physical like the Presidential Physical isn't necessary every year, says Dr. Joseph Stubbs, president-elect of the American College of Physicians. Going every two to three years should suffice for the average healthy guy. Unless you suddenly find yourself sitting in the Oval Office.

### Four More Exec Physicals

The Presidential Physical isn't the only way to get a clean bill of health.

### EXECUTIVE MEDICINE OF SOUTHLAKE

#### SOUTHLAKE, TX

*Executive Physical: Gold: \$1,050; Gold Plus: \$2,900; Platinum: \$4,500*

Shelling out for the platinum physical will net you a full exam, including a virtual colonoscopy that uses high-speed CT scanners and computers to produce a 3-D image (read: no sedation and less, ahem, "invasion"), plus your doctor's personal cell phone number and e-mail address. If you have any problems or questions within a year after your checkup, your doc is at your disposal 24/7. Only two patients are admitted per morning, which takes away from the cattle call feel of normal doctors' offices. The facility prides itself on having state-of-the-art technology, which includes a cardiac stress test analyzed with a nuclear camera that

takes images of your heart at rest and after it reaches its maximum capacity while you're running on a treadmill. (The test garners more accurate results than the usual treadmill test that doesn't use a camera.)

### PRINCETON LONGEVITY CENTER

#### PRINCETON, NJ

*Comprehensive Exam: Base level: \$3,250*

A physician, a dietitian, and an exercise physiologist all share their knowledge during this one-day exam that focuses on fitness and lifestyle. A biomechanical workup analyzes your musculoskeletal system, down to your feet's arches. Patients hit a nearby gym for an hour or more with an instructor, who designs a personalized fitness program for them, says manager Andrea Lanza. Expensive new technology such as 64-slice CT scans, future-predicting virtual colonoscopies, and full-body scans — all of which can detect cancer and other abnormalities — help justify the price tag.

### UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO MEDICAL CENTER

#### CHICAGO

*Executive Health Appointment: \$2,500*

The medical center benefits from being linked to the University of Chicago, which allows executive health patients to have immediate access to some of the top medical professionals in the world, says Dr. William R. Harper, medical director for the program. That goes for family members as well; if one of your relatives develops a disease, such as

cancer, you'll be able to call a university specialist for an appointment. "We know you, as opposed to just a cold call to the clinic," Harper says. The physical itself includes university-quality technology and face time with six professionals: Harper, a general physician; a dermatologist; an ophthalmologist; an audiologist; a nutritionist; and a personal trainer. Also, the standard treadmill test is conducted by a university physician with cardiology training. The hospital will try to bill any extra add-on tests (such as a colonoscopy) to your insurance, Harper says.

### MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL

#### BOSTON

*Executive Core Physical: \$1,400 (ages 45 and older: \$1,600)*

Personalization is the buzzword for this hospital's full physical, which could take either two hours or a day and a half, depending on the patient's needs, says director of health services Marianne Gibbons. The clinical exam includes a medical history review, a visual acuity exam, a colonoscopy (if needed), a lung function test, an EKG, a "chemistry profile" that includes a cholesterol screening, and blood sugar, liver, and kidney tests. The hospital also tries to minimize trendy testing. "We're not adding the new test or the new feature just because we're able to," Gibbons says. "It's really based on the individual's needs and medical history rather than getting a full-body scan."

—J.B.

## QUIZ YOUR DOCTOR

*Not about to shell out thousands for a physical? Get the most out of your next routine checkup by asking these five questions.*

#### Is my workout routine reasonable?

You're always told to consult with a doctor before you begin a new exercise regimen, but how many of us actually do? Let your doc know how hard and how often you work out, especially if you're preparing for a marathon or a big climb. That way he can assess whether you're doing too much or not enough and tell you if you should be taking any precautions, says Debra Roter, professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Also let him know if you're working out with a personal trainer and discuss any supplements you're taking, from protein powder to vitamins.

#### Can I have a tuberculosis skin test?

While TB is a common bacterial disease even in North America, it's especially important to get a TB test if you spend a lot of time out of the country. "Tuberculosis can be endemic in Third World countries," says Darvish. Some undiagnosed TB cases can result in death.

#### Can you show me how to do an appropriate testicular exam?

It might be awkward, but asking your doctor to describe a self-exam in a detailed fashion could save your life, says Darvish. Here are his pointers: Once a month examine yourself after a hot shower, when the testicles are

descended in the scrotum. Pull each testicle to its side so the skin doesn't interfere with the exam, and stretch the skin of the scrotum over the testicle. Feel with your thumb in every direction on the testicle: front, side, and back. By pushing it against the skin you'll be able to see if there are any areas that are not smooth. Look for lumps or any irregular bumps on a testicle; if you're doing regular exams you'll feel what's normal and what's not.

#### Can I have a high-sensitivity CRP test?

This sensitive blood test can detect high levels of protein (a sign of inflammation) and assess heart attack risk, Darvish says. Be sure, though, that you're getting the "high-sensitivity" test, and not the standard CRP test offered, which is less accurate.

#### What should I be doing to prevent heart attacks?

Asking specifically about preventing heart disease, America's leading killer, may not occur to you if you're eating right and exercising, but a number of other factors — from stress to using certain over-the-counter drugs — may be damaging your heart without you knowing it. This question will lead to an in-depth discussion about risk factors, says Dr. Mark Silverman, emeritus professor of medicine at Emory University. —J.B.