



## PATIENT REFERENCE GUIDE

# WHAT TO EXPECT DURING YOUR ANNUAL WELLNESS EXAM

## REGISTRATION

When you arrive at ERHC North, you will be asked to submit your completed **Registration Paperwork**. This paperwork has been provided to you as an addendum to this Patient Reference Guide. To expedite your visit, please complete this paperwork prior to your arrival. If you are unable to fill out the paperwork in advance, please plan to arrive 10 minutes prior to your scheduled appointment to allow time for completion.

Your Registration Paperwork includes a **Medical History** form. Your responses will enable your healthcare team to assess your overall health, toward better understanding your current health risks and long-term wellness needs. However, in accordance with ERHC Patient's Rights policies, you may decline to complete all, or any section, of the form. (We ask that you do provide a complete list of your current prescription or over-the-counter medications or dietary supplements, as these may impact the safety or accuracy of exam procedures.)

ERHC North patient privacy and confidentiality is strictly maintained in compliance with state and federal regulations. Personal health information will be shared with your employer only upon your express written consent, *except as noted herein*. A complete copy of ERHC privacy practices is available upon request.

After submitting your paperwork, you will be escorted into the Health Center by a member of our clinical staff.

## MEDICAL EXAM

Your *Annual Wellness Exam* will consist of the procedures outlined on the following pages, and may take from 2 to 2½ hours to complete for new patients and 1½ to 2 hours for established patients. Your exam will be administered by qualified personnel, such as a registered nurse or medical assistant.

**IMPORTANT:** In order to minimize the risk of discomfort or complications during the exam, be certain to note any special instructions for patient preparation, as indicated throughout this Patient Reference Guide by (!).

Your exam technician may provide additional patient instructions prior to initiating individual testing procedures. **In general, patients are advised to:**

- ✓ Wear loose, unrestrictive clothing and athletic shoes. (Women may be most comfortable in a sports bra; this undergarment should be free of underwires and metal clips.)
- ✓ Avoid jewelry and accessories that would interfere with wearing headphones or electrodes placed on the arms, legs, or torso.
- ✓ Report any skin sensitivity or allergies, and review the enclosed guidance regarding skin preparation.
- ✓ Report any history of heart or lung conditions when you schedule your first appointment, and alert your exam technician at the time of your visit.
- ✓ Report all medications and supplements you are currently using.
- ✓ Avoid heavy meals immediately prior to your exam; be certain to be well-hydrated.
- ✓ Avoid intense exercise immediately prior to your exam.
- ✓ Bring your glasses/contact lenses and/or hearing aids with you to the Health Center.

The Medical Exam may consist of up to 6 procedures, **to include vision screening, audiology screening, spirometry (lung function test), a chest X-ray, a resting EKG tracing, and a cardiac stress test** (in addition to any necessary immunization updates and an evaluation by an ERHC medical provider). Your testing regimen will depend on whether or not you are a first-time or continuing patient, and the type of active duty you perform. This guide further explains each testing procedure in detail. Patients are expected to be able to drive following their exam; it should not be necessary to schedule a ride.

! Any required vaccination updates will be provided during your exam. Be certain to bring your **vaccination records** to your appointment.

! While the *Annual Wellness Exam* is covered by your employer or insurance, patients may elect to request certain additional laboratory tests or immunizations; please bring your **insurance identification card** to verify coverage and avoid out-of-pocket expenses for any insured services. Please call ERHC North with any questions.

## TESTING PROCEDURES

**Collection of Vital Signs:** Vital signs are basic health indicators that help to identify immediate medical concerns as well as chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure.

Prior to initiating other testing procedures, your technician will record your vital signs, to include:

- |                      |                           |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| ⌘ Height and Weight  | ⌘ Pulse Oximetry          |
| ⌘ Blood Pressure     | ⌘ Temperature             |
| ⌘ Heart Rate (pulse) | ⌘ Abdominal Circumference |

**Laboratory Exams:** Paired with a comprehensive physical exam, blood and urine tests provide insight into your current health, and may detect emerging health risks or chronic conditions. *While your employer may schedule a drug test in tandem with your laboratory visit, drug tests are not conducted by ERHC North or included in your routine Annual Wellness Exam.*

Laboratory exams should be completed **48 hours prior** to your scheduled physical exam, so that your medical provider can review results with you during your visit. *Please refer to the pre-exam letter that you received for laboratory locations, operating hours, and scheduling instructions, or contact us at (509) 824-7327.*

! Follow all instructions noted in your pre-exam letter, to include fasting 8 to 10 hours prior to your laboratory visit. Proper hydration may reduce discomfort during these procedures.

Laboratory exams will include:

✓ A **blood draw** (venipuncture). A blood sample will be collected into vials using a hypodermic needle.

Following the blood draw, a compression bandage will be placed on the site of the draw. Compression bandages consist of a gauze pad secured by a latex-free wrap and/or medical-grade tape, either of which may cause temporary skin irritation.

! If you have any known sensitivities to bandages or tape, please notify ERHC North staff and the technician administering your blood draw.

✓ A **urine sample**. Patients will be provided with a sterile cup during their laboratory visit; private restrooms are available for collection.

Both new and returning patients will be asked to undergo blood and urine analysis.

Laboratory testing may vary by patient need. Typical analysis may include:

- ▮ CBC (complete blood count)
- ▮ Comprehensive chemistry profile
- ▮ Fasting lipid panel
- ▮ Hemoglobin A1c\*  
\*If fasting glucose results are  $\geq 100$
- ▮ PSA (prostate specific antigen)\*\*  
\*\*For men ages 45 or older
- ▮ Urinalysis (specific gravity, protein, glucose, occult blood)

New patients may also be asked to undergo infectious disease screening:

- ▮ HIV and Hepatitis C screening\*\*\*  
\*\*\*Available annually, upon request, to returning patients with potential exposure
- ▮ Hepatitis B antibody titer (to ensure lifetime immunity)

For your convenience, additional testing is available upon request (thyroid function, vitamin D level, etc.).  
*Please contact ERHC to inquire about including additional tests.*

**Vision Screening:** ERHC North vision screening is used to measure visual acuity (sharpness), to determine if corrective lenses are needed in order for patients to meet minimum requirements for active duty/service (to include Peace Officer Standards and Training - POST). If corrective lenses are required, you will be referred to a qualified optometrist or ophthalmologist to obtain a prescription. ERHC North vision testing does not include a complete eye examination (i.e. glaucoma testing) and **does not substitute for routine visits to your eye doctor.**

New patients will be asked to undergo a computerized vision screening exam, in order to obtain a baseline assessment. During subsequent visits, patient will undergo follow-up vision screening, in which they will be asked to read various lines from a wall-mounted chart from a distance of 20 feet (using both eyes, and each eye individually).

! If you currently wear corrective lenses, please bring them to your exam. There are no risks reported in association with these screenings, which are not expected to result in any temporary visual impairment.

**Audiology (Hearing) Screening:** ERHC audiology screening is used to measure hearing acuity, or the ability to detect sounds at varying frequencies as required by employers for active duty/service. ERHC testing meets and exceeds standards established by Peace Officer Standards and Training - POST.\*

Patients will be outfitted with a pair of headphones, and be asked to push a button at various intervals when prompted by a beep or tone. Patients undergoing screening at the ERHC North clinic will be screened using an OSHA sound booth; travel clinic patients will undergo screening in a quiet room.

! You will need to remove any items that may prevent you from wearing headphones, such as earrings or hair accessories. There are no risks reported in association with audiology screening.

Both new and returning patients will be asked to undergo audiology on an annual basis.

\*Tested frequencies range from 500<sub>Hz</sub> to 8000<sub>Hz</sub>.

**IMPORTANT:** Because first responder agencies establish vision and hearing standards as a condition of employment, **vision screening and audiology results will be shared with your agency employer.** Please contact your HR representative with any questions.

***Spirometry (Lung Function) Testing:*** Spirometry measures the amount and speed of air that a patient can exhale. Optimal lung function is critical to occupational fitness; poor lung function may signal an underlying condition such as asthma, COPD/emphysema, lung mass, or neurologic disease.

To complete a computerized spirometry test, you will be provided with a hand-held, tube-shaped disposable meter. After taking a deep breath, you will be instructed to exhale as fast as possible for 6 - 8 seconds. The test will generate a spirogram, which will record the total volume of air in the lungs (forced vital capacity or FVC), the volume of air expired in the first second (forced expiratory volume or FEV1), the FVC/FEV1 ratio, and other measures. You may receive additional instructions from your exam technician.

Spirometry is considered to be a low-risk procedure. However, a hard exhale, as is required to complete this test, can temporarily increase pressure in the chest, abdomen, and eyes. Some patients may feel temporary shortness of breath, lightheadedness, or dizziness after completing the test. In very rare occasions, the test may trigger fainting.

**!** If you have a **heart, lung, or eye condition** (or concerning symptoms), have a condition that requires the use of **inhaled breathing medications**, or have had **recent surgery** to your eyes or abdomen, please alert ERHC North personnel prior to scheduling your *Annual Wellness Exam*. You may wish to wear loose clothing, and avoid eating a large meal prior to your test, in order to prevent restricted breathing.

New patients will be asked to undergo spirometry during their initial exam; firefighters and members of Clan Lab/Haz Mat teams will be asked to repeat this test annually.

***Radiology (Chest X-Ray):*** Paired with a comprehensive physical exam, a posterior-anterior and lateral chest X-ray may be used to detect chronic conditions or emerging health risks, such as certain heart or lung conditions (including tuberculosis, cancer, cardiomyopathy – enlarged heart), or injury and disease to the thoracic spine.

You will be asked to stand in front of an X-ray machine, and receive instructions on the placement of your body against the unit. It may be necessary for the technician to reposition you to obtain optimal images. You may elect to wear a loose-fitting top that is free of possible obstructions (e.g. buttons), or will be provided with a paper robe. You will be asked to remove any jewelry or accessories that might interfere with results.

Chest X-rays result in minimal exposure to radiation, or the equivalent of 10 days of background exposure (the amount of radiation emitted from natural surroundings). (Radiological Society of North America, 2016, per [www.radiologyinfo.org](http://www.radiologyinfo.org)). Your technician will calibrate your exam, based on your measurements, in order to further minimize your exposure.

Your chest X-ray will be administered by a certified radiology technician, and reviewed by a board-certified radiologist (MD or DO).

New patients will be asked to undergo a chest X-ray during their initial *Annual Wellness Exam*; firefighters and members of the Clan Lab team will be asked to undergo repeat X-ray every 2 to 5 years.

**Resting Electrocardiogram (EKG):** An EKG is a simple procedure to record the electrical activity of the heart, in order to detect abnormal rhythms (arrhythmias or dysrhythmias) or heart muscle damage. Used in combination with other cardiac tests, an EKG can be used to detect heart conditions and establish a baseline to evaluate changes to heart function over time.

During the EKG, you will lie flat on an examination table. For best results, you will be asked to remove clothing from the waist up; female patients may elect to wear a wireless bra or sports bra. (Patients may choose to wear a loose-fitting top that is free of obstructions, e.g. buttons, during the procedure. Patients may also request that a technician of the same gender administer their exam, when staffing resources permit.)

Ten adhesive electrodes will be placed on your torso, arms, and legs. Four of the electrodes will be placed on your left side; the EKG technician may need to position your left breast to ensure proper electrode placement. Lead wires will then be attached to connect the 10 electrodes to the computerized monitor. The tracing process – or the recording of heart rhythms – will last approximately 5 minutes. Once tracing is completed, the technician will disconnect the leads and remove the electrodes.

**IMPORTANT:** Any motion, or movement of EKG lead wires, may impact test results, leading to inaccurate findings or the need to repeat the test. Patients will be directed to lie still and refrain from talking during the EKG, and will be asked to remove jewelry, accessories, or other objects that may interfere with testing.

In some cases, your technician may need to prepare your skin to ensure adequate conductivity by the electrodes, which require continuous skin contact to obtain a reliable tracing. Skin preparation may include cleaning the electrode sites (using warm soap and water) or clipping excess hair. You can reduce the need for skin preparation by ensuring your torso is free of moisture, lotions, or powders prior to your exam. Patients may experience minor discomfort, similar to removing a bandage, when the electrode adhesives are removed.

The EKG is considered to be a low-risk procedure. Electrodes record electrical activity; they do not emit electricity or place patients at risk of electric shock.

! You may wish to avoid **intense exercise**, **heavy meals**, or **smoking** prior to the resting EKG, as these activities may alter your test results. Be certain to tell your EKG technician about any **medications or supplements** you are currently taking.

! In rare cases, patients may experience temporary skin allergies from contact with the EKG electrode gel patches; the electrode tape may also cause temporary redness or swelling of the skin. Please alert your technician if you have **sensitive skin**, or have a **history of skin reactions** to prior EKGs; you may be offered a skin barrier.

Both new and returning patients will be asked to undergo an annual resting EKG test.

**Cardiac Stress Testing:** Cardiac stress testing is used to detect heart conditions which may signal chronic disease or lead to a heart attack, particularly in individuals with high-stress or high-exertion occupations.

At ERHC North, cardiac stress testing is performed using a computerized treadmill exercise test. You will be asked to walk or run on a treadmill while your heart rhythms, heart rate, and blood pressure are monitored. Your technician will select a specific testing protocol<sup>1</sup> – altering treadmill incline and speed – based on your unique physiology or concerns about impact (with respect to low back pain, knee pain, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Bruce, Modified Bruce, or Gerkin. Gerkin is the preferred method, allowing for estimation of VO<sub>2</sub> max, or maximum rate of oxygen consumption.

As with the EKG, electrodes will be placed on your torso, arms, and legs, and be connected to a computerized monitor via lead wires. After obtaining the resting EKG, the arm and leg electrodes will be repositioned to your torso to allow for walking and running. Your technician will remain with you throughout your test, which will last approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Following the exercise portion of your test, you will be instructed to lie down (in the supine, or face-up, position); this may result in temporary discomfort (additional shortness of breath and lightheadedness), but will increase the effectiveness of the exam.

For optimal results, patients should plan to undress above the waist, and wear comfortable running shorts, socks and running shoes. A sports bra is recommended for women; this undergarment should not have metal wiring or clips, which could interfere with electrode sensors. Patient gowns are available (if a sports bra is not available). To provide additional modesty, both men and women may wear a short-sleeved, loose fitting T-shirt. (Patients may request that a technician of the same gender administer their cardiac stress test.)

**!** In order to ensure accurate results, your technician will prepare your skin to ensure adequate conductivity and adhesion by the electrodes, which require continuous skin contact. Skin preparation will include cleaning the electrode sites and wiping them with isopropyl alcohol (to remove excess oil), shaving excess hair, and/or gentle dermabrasion (in which a medical-grade sandpaper is used to remove a fine patch of the outermost layer of skin, comprised of dead cells). Some patients may experience temporary skin allergies from contact with the EKG electrode gel patches; the electrode tape or dermabrasion may also cause irritation such as temporary redness or swelling of the skin. Please alert your technician if you have **sensitive skin or a history of prior reactions to EKG electrodes**; you may be offered a skin barrier or alternatives to dermabrasion.

For best results, you will be directed to exert yourself as much as possible, with a goal to achieve at least 85% of your predicted maximum heart rate. You will be given complete instructions on how to initiate and stop the test, and will be advised to **alert your technician if you experience:**

- ✓ **Abnormal shortness of breath.**
- ✓ **Chest pain or pressure.**
- ✓ **Severe headache.**
- ✓ **Dizziness, lightheadedness, or fatigue.**
- ✓ **Knee, back, or other musculoskeletal pain.**

**!** You may wish to avoid **intense exercise, heavy meals, or smoking** prior to the cardiac stress test, as these activities may alter your test results. Be certain to tell your technician about any **medications** you are taking.

**!** In rare instances, patients undergoing cardiac stress tests may experience **irregular heartbeats, or a heart attack**. Such unlikely side effects are the result of physical exertion, not the EKG procedure itself. (Electrodes record electrical activity; they do not emit electricity or place patients at risk of electric shock or altered heart rhythms.) Be certain to advise your technician if you have a **history of heart conditions, suspected heart disease, or take medication that may mimic the effects of exercise**.

**IMPORTANT:** If you experience **health concerns during or following the cardiac stress test** (to include skin irritation or musculoskeletal injury), **notify a member of the ERHC North staff immediately**. If you experience **heart symptoms** following the cardiac stress test and have left the ERHC North facility, please contact ERHC, and **proceed to the nearest Emergency Department** if you believe your condition is urgent.

All new patients will be asked to undergo the cardiac stress test. Follow-up tests will be performed as follows, based on relative risk for heart disease by age group:

Age	Testing Schedule
40 and older	Every Year
30 - 39	Every 2 Years
20 - 29	Every 3 Years

## **STANDARD REPORTING**

Patients experiencing any adverse effects related to the cardiac stress test or other portion of the *Annual Wellness Exam* are asked to contact ERHC North immediately, and seek immediate medical attention through ERHC North or an Emergency Department (for urgent conditions).

## **PERSONAL MEDICAL REPORT**

You will receive a customized report detailing the results of your *Annual Wellness Exam*. This report will include your laboratory test values, the results of testing procedures, and “Doctor’s Notes” outlining results of your medical evaluation. Your report will include a personalized *Emergency Responder’s Metabolic Syndrome* score, outlining key health indicators that signal your risk for emerging health conditions or chronic disease. Your report will supply comparisons of metabolic scores aggregated for your profession, across the region.

Personal Medical Reports will remain confidential, and will be shared with your employer in aggregate form only (i.e. individual values will be combined/calculated with results from other members of your force/department, and therefore remain anonymous). You may request that your results be shared with your personal physician, if ERHC North is not your primary medical home.

As noted previously, for individuals undergoing entry-level examinations, the results of vision screening and audiology *only* will be shared with your first responder agency employer. Please contact your HR representative with any questions.