

# Shortcuts Doctors Take When Giving You a Checkup or Physical

**R**emember the good old days when doctors would make house calls? Those days are long gone. Today, we're in an era of assembly-line medicine. HMOs call the shots ... and everyone feels the squeeze.

To make up for it, doctors' offices try to cram as many appointments as possible into a day. And to get to all those patients, doctors often take shortcuts during the physical — shortcuts that can seriously affect your health! Here are the steps most commonly omitted:

■ **Blood pressure.** This vital sign is typically checked in one arm while the patient is sitting. But for a more accurate reading, blood pressure should be tested in *both* arms, preferably while you're lying down. Why both arms? Because a difference in blood pressure between one arm and the other may indicate a blockage in one of the large blood vessels! (To be significant, this difference must be 15% or more.)

By the way, if you're taking blood pressure medication, your doctor should check your blood pressure a *third* time, immediately after you stand up. If the pressure drops by more than 10%, you may need to change your dosage.

■ **Hamstrings.** Few doctors test these muscles at the back

of the thighs to identify potential back problems. To do so, the doctor should ask you to lie on your back and lift each leg to a 90° angle.

If you can't perform the lift, you may need a stretching program to relax the hamstrings.

■ **Lymph nodes.** Doctors usually check the lymph nodes in the neck, but often neglect to check the nodes in the groin and underarms. But checking *all* the lymph nodes is important, since swollen lymph nodes may signal infection, and lumps could mean cancer.

■ **Pulse points.** Your doctor probably checks your pulse in your neck and/or groin — but may skip your feet. If pulse strength differs in these 3 areas, it can be a sign of peripheral arterial disease.

■ **Thyroid.** This butterfly-shaped gland at the base of the neck is often missed during the lymph node exam. By tapping on the thyroid, your doctor can screen for thyroid cancer.

## Laboratory Tests

Most doctors check your cholesterol ... your liver and kidney functions ... your blood sugar ... and your white blood



cell count. But today we know there are other blood tests that are just as important. *These tests include ...*

■ **Magnesium.** Low levels of this mineral can cause fatigue, generalized pain and/or muscle spasms. It can also increase your risk of a heart attack!

■ **Zinc.** A deficiency of this immune-strengthening mineral can lead to frequent infection.

■ **Iron.** Elevated levels of this mineral cause iron overload (*hemochromatosis*).

■ **C-reactive protein, homocysteine and lipoprotein (a).** Elevated levels of any of these 3 substances put you at greater risk for a heart attack or stroke. In fact, increasing evidence suggests that these markers are *much more accurate* predictors of heart disease than cholesterol!

Fortunately, these blood imbalances are easy to diagnose. You'll get additional details in your free Special Report.

