



The best \$30 you'll ever spend

By Donella Young, MD, North Basin Medical Clinics



If I were to give you \$30 to spend on improving your health, what would you do with it? Purchase vitamins? Fruits and vegetables? Buy a pedometer so you could track how far you walk? You could put it toward a weight loss membership in Lincoln Hospital's "Successfully Slim" or use the money to purchase exercise equipment. All these are great things, but when your health is at stake, just what is the most precious thing \$30 can buy?

Knowledge.

That's what Lincoln Hospital offers at its annual Spring & Fall Check Up and Blood Draws – a special service to the community.

You see, unless you know the state of your health, you really don't know how to improve it. Neither does your healthcare provider. Without knowing your cholesterol levels, glucose, blood pressure and a whole host of other things, your physician isn't seeing the real picture of your health. It's like looking in a mirror in a dimly lit room. We can't see the details, and we can't fix a problem we can't see. Isn't it great to know that a simple blood test can turn on the light for you and your provider?

Let's look at that \$30 and the value of a Comprehensive Blood Profile.

First off, at any other time of the year, this blood test would cost over \$300. The Fall Check Up is a special program by Lincoln Hospital priced low so that anyone can afford it. Not only will you save \$300, but you could end up saving your own life by getting the nitty gritty on...

Your heart

Cholesterol is just one of the fats in your blood. Cholesterol is made up of **Triglycerides**, **High Density Lipoproteins** (HDL – good proteins) and **Low Density Lipoproteins** (LDL – bad proteins). High cholesterol in itself isn't good for your heart, but looking at the details, elevated LDL and Triglyceride levels are worse. LDL and Triglycerides contribute to the build up of plaque and clots in the arteries, which can cut down on blood flow to the heart or brain. Your doctor needs to know your total cholesterol and your HDL and LDL levels to see your heart health clearly.

Your liver and kidneys

BUN and **Creatinine** tell us if your kidneys are working properly by the amount of waste found in your blood. **Uric Acid** testing is generally used to detect gout and **Albumin** and **T. Protein** are good indicators of general nutrition. As for liver function, there are five tests that assess the liver and can help us diagnose hepatitis, among other liver problems.

Your thyroid

TSH is secreted by the pituitary gland and regulates the thyroid gland. High or low TSH means your thyroid isn't working within the range the body needs to stay healthy. This is a hugely important test where we often pick up many undiagnosed thyroid problems.

Your blood and immune system

- **Glucose** looks for the amount of sugar in the blood and can detect Diabetes – a major debilitating disease that affects almost all body systems.
- **Electrolytes.** These tests show the amount of these elements in the blood: **Sodium, Potassium & Chloride.** Sodium and potassium levels are extremely important as they tell us if cells are working properly and can play a role in blood pressure and heart rate problems.
- **Hemogram/CBC** measures your white blood count. White blood cells fight off disease. If you have increased levels of white blood cells, your body is fighting a bacterial infection or possibly, leukemia. To detail your red blood count, **Hemoglobin** and **Hematocrit** testing is done. This tells us if you have anemia or low blood levels. A **Platelet Test** is one way to let us know if your blood clots normally.

Your bones

Calcium & Phosphorus not only give data on bone health, but on kidney function as well.

Impressed? You should be. The Comprehensive Blood Profile is the "All Star" of general health blood tests. It takes just a few minutes and will give both you and your healthcare provider critical information about your health.