

# OHEP - Occupational Health and Exposure Program

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The Occupational Health and Exposure Program (OHEP) was created by the Hamilton Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 288 in partnership with the Hamilton Fire Department. The program started in 1999 as a result of over 260 Hamilton firefighters and support staff that were involved with the Plastimet fire in July 1997. In the days immediately following the fire the HPFFA and its membership were extremely concerned about what they were exposed to for four days and the level of that exposure. The HPFFA worked together with medical and health and safety experts from both Canada and the United States to determine what information was required from the participant in order to monitor their health. Once the program was established final approval was voted on by Hamilton City Council for a long term monitoring program. The program has gone through several revisions from its inception to update its test and procedures and has added different test to meet the needs of the participants. To this date the program has simply been an enormous success and continues to run smoothly every year.

The OHEP Clinic helps promote, protect and preserve the occupational health, safety and wellbeing of the members of the HFD by offering participants clinical tests, questionnaires, occupational medicine exams and consults, and education pertinent to workplace biological, chemical, physical and mental exposures and stresses. On an individual basis the program can help with: prevention and early detection of occupational health exposures, injuries and disease; and, can assist individuals with next steps in management of such health issues (if applicable). Conducting an analysis of all results as a group can help identify pertinent trends within the cohort that can assist the OHEP Steering Committee with the continuous evolution and improvement of the program.

All clinic information is confidential. Data is collected and analyzed as part of a group summary only after all personal identifiers are removed. No data is published externally for any reason.

All results are discussed thoroughly with participants and made available for their personal health care providers. The OHEP clinic is intended to supplement and enhance the effectiveness of visits with personal physicians. It is not meant to replace the regular visits one should have with a general practitioner.

There are two appointments to attend. Starting in late summer we start collecting blood and urine specimens. Results are reviewed by our physician, and discussed at your medical appointment. Medical appointments start in October. This consists of an appointment to complete the questionnaire, clinical tests, medical consult and exam.

## Medical Testing

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All components of the program are voluntary, and are listed below:

Annually:

Lab tests (blood and urine) – complete blood count, liver and kidney functions, glucose, urine microscopic and chemical analysis

Questionnaire – demographic, alcohol, smoking, sleep, mental health, physical/biological/chemical exposures and stresses

Medical exam and consult with Occupational Medicine Physician

Spirometry – lung function measuring various volumes and capacities forced out after a maximal inhalation

Every 3 years:

Audiometry – pure tone air conduction threshold testing in 500, 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, 6000, and 8000 Hz frequencies

Body composition monitoring – weight, body fat %, body water %, muscle mass

Cardiovascular - ECG and lipid assessment (triglycerides, HDL, LDL)

Every 5 years:

Chest x-ray – single view PA

## Contacts

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Please feel free to reach out with any questions or comments you may have.

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- **Chris Newstead**, OHEP Committee Representatives, [newsteadchris@hotmail.com](mailto:newsteadchris@hotmail.com); and **Ed (Jaanus) Anja**; [jaeanja@gmail.com](mailto:jaeanja@gmail.com); (647) 888-1174
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## Summary / Main Points:

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- Voluntary. You may participate in some, all, or none of the components of the program.
- Private and confidential. You get a private half-hour appointment with an occupational medicine specialist, plus clinical tests not often offered at family physician offices. All results are stored confidentially at our clinic. Results are only provided to you.
- This is not a research study. No confidential information is shared or published. After personal identifiers are removed, we analyze and report our observations to the OHEP Steering Committee so they can continuously upgrade and improve the program for the benefit of your health and wellness.