

TESTING TO CONSIDER FOR WOMEN 40+

Before being told “it’s just perimenopause”



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the **belle** method

It's NEVER too late to advocate for your health

Hi friends! Nikki from The Belle Method here. I asked my friend, Registered Acupuncturist and TCMP Anne Matthews ([Energy Tree Studios](#)) for a list of medical tests she often recommends for women in her practice.

We are both passionate advocates for women's health—especially in midlife where so many “symptoms” are chalked up to “perimenopause”.

Here's what we know: Women in their late 30s + are too often told their issues are "just hormones" without a proper medical work-up first.

Perimenopause is real. HRT can be life-changing. But those conversations should come after we've ruled out other common, treatable causes of fatigue, anxiety, weight changes, and brain fog.

If you're feeling dismissed, gaslit, or like something's "off" but you can't quite name it, you're not alone. Been there. So many of us have.

You deserve answers. You deserve thorough testing.

This guide is a practical checklist to bring to your next doctor's appointment. It's not about self-diagnosing—it's about self-advocating.

*Because the right testing can change everything.
Knowledge is empowerment.*

 Listen to Anne + Nikki's podcast episode for more info [\[HERE\]](#)

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Here’s a practical checklist to bring to your doctor:

Note: Not all testing is necessary for every woman — this checklist supports individualized care.

1) Complete Blood Count (CBC)

Why it matters: Screens for anemia, infection, and inflammatory patterns

Symptoms it can explain: Fatigue, weakness, dizziness, shortness of breath

2) Comprehensive Metabolic Panel (CMP)

Why it matters: Assesses liver function, kidney health, electrolytes, and blood glucose

Symptoms it can explain: Low energy, weakness, “unexplained malaise”

3) Ferritin (Iron Storage) [Not just serum iron]

Why it matters: Low iron stores are one of the biggest hidden drivers of exhaustion and hair loss in women

Symptoms it can explain: Hair shedding, fatigue, poor exercise tolerance

Many women feel poorly with ferritin under ~50, even if technically “in range.”

4) Vitamin B12

Why it matters: Essential for nervous system function, mood, and energy production

Symptoms it can explain: Brain fog, fatigue, anxiety, tingling, low mood

5) Vitamin D (25-OH)

Why it matters: Functions more like a hormone than a vitamin

Symptoms it can explain: Low mood, immune issues, bone/joint pain, fatigue

6) Full Thyroid Panel [Not just TSH Include: TSH, Free T4, Free T3, Thyroid Antibodies (TPO + TgAb)]

Why it matters: Early or autoimmune thyroid dysfunction is commonly missed

Symptoms it can explain: Fatigue, weight changes, hair loss, cold intolerance, depression/anxiety

7) Morning Cortisol (Blood or Saliva)

Why it matters: Chronic stress and nervous system dysregulation can mimic hormone imbalance

Symptoms it can explain: Wired-but-tired feeling, anxiety, sleep disruption

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Here’s a practical checklist to bring to your doctor:

8) Sex Hormone Testing [Estradiol (E2), Progesterone, FSH, LH]

Why it matters: Helps clarify where someone may be in the menopausal transition

Symptoms it can explain: Night sweats, mood swings, sleep disruption, cycle changes

Strong Add-Ons (Often Missed)

Not always needed — but important in many women over 40:

9) HbA1c + Fasting Insulin [Blood sugar + metabolic health]

Why it matters: Blood sugar dysregulation can worsen fatigue, weight gain, and

mood

Symptoms it can explain: Energy crashes, irritability, stubborn weight gain, brain fog

10) Lipid Panel (Cholesterol + Triglycerides)

Why it matters: Cardiovascular risk shifts significantly during perimenopause

Symptoms it can explain: Supports long-term prevention, not just symptom chasing

11) CRP (Inflammation Marker)

Why it matters: Helps assess systemic inflammation when symptoms feel unexplained

Symptoms it can explain: Body aches, fatigue, inflammatory patterns

WHEN TO TEST (Timing Matters)

Most bloodwork can be done any day, but some hormone testing is most useful when timed correctly.

Can be tested anytime in the cycle: These do not require a specific cycle day:

- CBC
- CMP
- Ferritin
- Vitamin B12
- Vitamin D
- Thyroid panel (TSH, Free T4/T3, antibodies)
- HbA1c / fasting insulin
- Lipids
- CRP

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Hormone Testing: Best Timing

Day 3 labs (between day 2 and 4 of your cycle)

This is the standard baseline window for:

- FSH
- LH
- Estradiol (E2)

Why: These are most interpretable early in the follicular phase, before ovulation hormones rise.

These labs offer insight into how the brain and ovaries are communicating at baseline — a useful starting point, especially when cycles begin to change in the late 30s and 40s. Elevated FSH or LH at baseline can be an early sign of changing ovarian responsiveness. A “normal” result does not always rule out hormonal transition: trends and symptoms matter.

Progesterone: Mid-Luteal Phase (About 7 days after ovulation)

Progesterone should not be tested on Day 3.

It is most accurate: Day 19–23 in a 28-day cycle OR 7 days after ovulation, regardless of cycle length

Why: Progesterone is meant to peak after ovulation. Progesterone levels can tell us:

- Whether ovulation is occurring
- The strength of the luteal phase

Whether symptoms are related to low progesterone vs estrogen dominance

Common midlife pattern:

- In perimenopause, progesterone often declines before estrogen does
- This can contribute to symptoms like anxiety, poor sleep, heavier periods, PMS, and shorter cycles

Cortisol: Test morning only between 7–10 AM

Cortisol follows a strong daily rhythm.

Why timing matters:

Cortisol is naturally highest in the morning to help you wake up, mobilize energy, and regulate blood sugar. Testing later in the day can give misleading results.

What morning cortisol can tell us:

- How well your body initiates energy for the day
- Clues around fatigue, anxiety, and stress tolerance
- Whether cortisol output is low, adequate, or elevated at baseline

Common patterns we see:

- Low morning cortisol → difficulty waking, low energy, brain fog
- Elevated morning cortisol → anxiety, racing thoughts, early waking

This guide is meant to support informed conversations with your healthcare provider — not replace medical care. Your symptoms matter, and asking better questions often leads to better care.

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Love, Anne & Nikki

@TheBelleMethod



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