

# Midlife Health Check: 3 Lab Tests for Women Over 40

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As women enter midlife, many experience new or unexplained symptoms like fatigue, mood swings, weight changes, and difficulty sleeping. While these are often brushed off as “normal” parts of aging, certain lab tests can help uncover hidden causes. These three panels are essential for understanding your hormonal and metabolic health during this transition—and can provide clarity on what’s really going on inside your body.

## A Full Thyroid Panel (Beyond TSH)

A healthy, well-functioning thyroid is key for energy, metabolism, and mood—and hormonal shifts in midlife can amplify existing thyroid issues. While many healthcare providers use TSH as a screening tool, TSH alone often doesn’t tell the full story.

For women experiencing fatigue, brain fog, or weight gain, a more comprehensive thyroid panel is often necessary. This should include TSH, Free T4, Free T3, and thyroid antibodies such as TPO and TGAb. These markers can help uncover underactive thyroid function (hypothyroidism), issues converting T4 into the active hormone T3, or autoimmune thyroid

disease such as Hashimoto’s.

## Adrenal Hormones: Cortisol & DHEA

Adrenal hormones play a crucial role in managing stress and maintaining energy. Chronic stress, sleep disturbances, and hormonal fluctuations in midlife often lead to adrenal imbalances—resulting in fatigue, burnout, mood swings, and disrupted sleep. And because adrenal function closely interacts with thyroid health, it deserves attention.

While standard blood tests might show normal levels, a 24-hour salivary cortisol test can detect imbalances in your daily cortisol rhythm. DHEA, another important adrenal hormone, may also be low after prolonged periods of stress. These functional imbalances often don’t meet the criteria for a formal diagnosis, yet they can still cause significant symptoms and impact quality of life. This is where naturopathic medicine approaches truly shine: identifying and supporting subtle dysfunctions that conventional testing may overlook.

## Cardiovascular Markers: Lipid Profile & hs-CRP

As estrogen declines in midlife, cardiovascular

risk naturally increases. While a standard lipid panel—measuring total cholesterol, LDL, HDL, and triglycerides—is a good starting point, it doesn’t always provide a complete picture of heart health.

For a more comprehensive assessment, additional markers can offer deeper insight. These include high-sensitivity C-reactive protein (hs-CRP), which detects inflammation linked to heart disease; apolipoprotein B, a stronger predictor of cardiovascular risk than LDL alone; and lipoprotein(a), a genetic factor that standard panels often miss. It’s also important to monitor hemoglobin A1c, which reflects average blood sugar levels over several months. Even mild elevations can increase vascular inflammation and cardiovascular risk—especially in women with a family history of diabetes or metabolic syndrome. For those with concerning risk factors, a coronary artery calcium score—an

imaging test—can further evaluate risk by detecting early plaque buildup in the arteries.



## The Bottom Line

As your body moves through the natural hormonal changes of midlife, staying informed becomes one of the best tools for protecting your long-term health. By focusing on key lab tests—thyroid function, adrenal balance, and cardiovascular markers—you can catch potential issues early and give your body the support it needs to thrive. Your health is unique, and personalized testing can provide a roadmap to better balance and resilience during this transformative phase.



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