

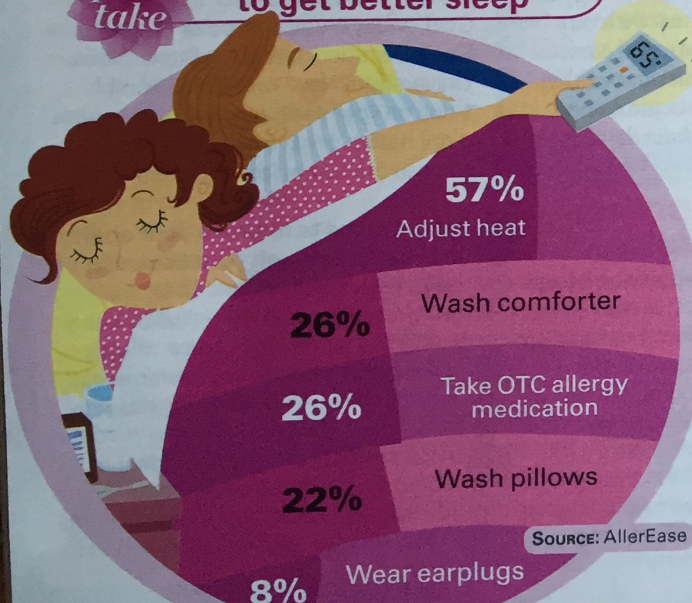
News: 3 blood tests women over 40 need

Your doctor won't order them unless you ask, but these 3 tests can pinpoint underlying causes of nagging concerns including belly fat, fatigue and fog so you can feel your best

This year, countless women will go to their doctors seeking help for low energy and won't-budge pounds, only to be told such symptoms are "normal" for women over 40. But to everyone who has ever been dismissed like that, Sara Gottfried, M.D., author of *The Hormone Reset Diet*, has a message: "It's *not* normal to feel fatigued, anxiety-ridden or unable to focus. And it's not true that women just have to accept getting fat and cranky as they age." With just a *little* targeted detective work, she says, it's possible to identify the cause of the symptoms—and to make simple lifestyle changes (like diet and exercise) that prevent those symptoms from turning into chronic health issues. "But you need to be your own health advocate, as your physician may not be aware of the benefits of certain tests," says Caroline J. Cederquist, M.D., author of *The MD Factor Diet*. Here, Dr. Gottfried and Dr. Cederquist discuss 3 tests every woman over 40 should get—but few M.D.s think to perform.

quick
take

Women's top tricks to get better sleep



Battling belly fat?

Ask for: Hemoglobin A1c

Typically given to diabetics, the A1c test shows how the body is regulating sugar levels over a 3-month period. But Dr. Cederquist recommends it yearly for non-diabetics as well—especially if you're struggling with stubborn belly fat—because it signals the beginning of insulin resistance long before a fasting glucose or insulin test would show it. And even tiny blood-sugar increases (still in the "normal" range on other tests) can be a warning that the body isn't processing sugar correctly and is storing it as fat. "When you know that's happening, it's easy to correct without medication," adds Dr. Cederquist. Ask your physician to order an A1c test, or do it yourself through RequestATest.com (\$29).

Feeling foggy? Stressed?

Ask for: Free T₃ and Free T₄

"Most doctors check thyroid levels when you bring up fog and fatigue, but they usually only check thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH)," says Dr. Cederquist. "I prefer a free T₃ and free T₄ test, which shows the actual levels of thyroid hormone." As she explains, the body makes T₃ (*triiodothyronine*) from another hormone called T₄ (*thyroxine*). Together, they tell the body how to use energy. But some women have trouble converting T₄ into T₃, so checking levels of both hormones is crucial to identify a sluggish thyroid. She advises that any woman gaining unexplained weight or feeling sluggish, cranky or anxious should ask for this test. A home test can also be ordered from online labs (like ZRTlab.com, \$65 for each test, T₃ and T₄).

Always tired?

Ask for: High-sensitivity CRP

Dr. Gottfried stresses that women over 40 should ask their doctor for a specialized high-sensitivity C-reactive protein (hs-CRP) test if they constantly feel run-down and lifestyle changes haven't helped. Why? CRP is a marker of internal inflammation, which is linked to everything from fatigue to fat to clogged arteries. "Women with high CRP levels have a higher risk of coronary artery disease, heart attacks and stroke," Dr. Gottfried cautions. An hs-CRP test flags this heart-risk marker. (Note that this is different than a general CRP test, which is used for those with serious disease and long-standing inflammation like rheumatoid arthritis.) *

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