



Understanding Your Female Hormone Labs

A practical, empowering guide to **when to test, what to request**, and **how to advocate for yourself** at the doctor's office. Knowing your hormones is one of the most powerful steps you can take for your health.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

HORMONE EDUCATION

When to Pull Your Hormone Labs

For women with regular periods, the ideal time to get hormone bloodwork is **days 19–21 of your menstrual cycle**. Here's how to count: **Cycle Day 1** is the first day of full menstrual bleeding — not spotting, but actual flow.



Simple Example: If your cycle is 28 days, count from Day 1 (first day of your period). When you reach days 19, 20, or 21 — that's when you schedule your blood draw. Testing too early or too late can make hormones appear "normal" or "low" when they're simply in a different phase.

Irregular cycles, PCOS, or no period? Your ideal testing window may be different. Work with your provider to individualize your timing.

Sex Hormones: What to Request & Why

These are the core reproductive hormones. Each one tells a different part of your story — don't let your provider check just one or two in isolation.

	LH Luteinizing Hormone — signals the ovaries to release an egg and supports progesterone production. Helps evaluate ovulation issues and PCOS patterns.
	FSH Follicle Stimulating Hormone — tells the ovaries to grow follicles and make estrogen. Key for assessing ovarian reserve and cycle irregularity.
	SHBG Sex Hormone Binding Globulin — a liver protein that "carries" hormones in the blood. If too high or low, it changes how much hormone your body can actually use.
	Estradiol (E2) The main active estrogen in women of reproductive age. Affects periods, mood, bone health, and heart health. "Estrogen" is the umbrella term; E2 is what's usually tested.
	Progesterone The luteal phase hormone — supports uterine lining, mood, and sleep. Mid-luteal testing confirms ovulation actually happened and whether levels are adequate.
	Testosterone Total + Free — imbalances relate to low libido, fatigue, hair changes, acne, and PCOS. Free testosterone is the portion your tissues can actually use.

The Full Thyroid Panel

Many doctors only check **TSH** — but that single number misses a lot. Ask for a **full thyroid panel** to get a truly complete picture of how your thyroid is functioning.

TSH (Thyroid Stimulating Hormone)

The pituitary's signal telling the thyroid how hard to work. It's the standard screening test — but a "normal" TSH alone does *not* guarantee optimal thyroid function.

Free T4 & Total T4

T4 (thyroxine) is the main hormone the thyroid produces. **Total T4** shows how much is made; **Free T4** shows how much is actually available to your body — unbound and ready to use.

Free T3 & Total T3

T3 is the more active thyroid hormone that drives metabolism and energy. Some people don't convert T4 → T3 well, and may still feel hypothyroid even if TSH and T4 look normal.

Reverse T3 (rT3)

An **inactive** form of T3 that can block normal T3 from working. High rT3 signals that the body is under stress or conserving energy — and can cause low-thyroid symptoms despite "normal" labs.

TPO Antibodies (TPOAb)

Immune system proteins that can attack the thyroid gland. High levels suggest an **autoimmune** condition (meaning your immune system is mistakenly targeting your own tissue) — like **Hashimoto's thyroiditis**, which is very common in women.

Metabolic & Organ Function Labs

Hormones don't work in isolation — your kidneys, liver, blood, and cholesterol levels all affect and reflect your hormonal health. These labs round out the full picture.

Comprehensive Metabolic Panel (CMP)

Kidney panel (BUN, creatinine, electrolytes): checks how well kidneys filter waste and manage fluids.

Liver panel (AST, ALT, ALP, bilirubin): the liver processes hormones and medications — poor liver function directly impacts hormone balance.

Lipid Panel & CBC

Lipid panel (total cholesterol, LDL, HDL, triglycerides): estrogen and thyroid hormones both affect cholesterol, making lipids a window into heart and metabolic health.

CBC (Complete Blood Count): measures red and white blood cells, hemoglobin, and platelets. Screens for anemia, infection, and immune issues that cause fatigue or low energy.

- ✔ Together, these labs give a **complete view** of your hormones, thyroid, metabolism, and overall health — far more meaningful than one or two numbers in isolation.

How to Talk to Your Doctor

You deserve thorough answers and complete testing. Here's how to walk into your appointment prepared and confident — no medical degree required.

1 Bring a Written List

Write down exactly which labs you want before your appointment. Having it on paper (or your phone) makes it easier to communicate clearly and ensures nothing gets left out.

2 Describe Your Symptoms First

Start by explaining what you're experiencing — fatigue, heavy periods, mood changes, weight shifts, low libido. Then say: *"I'd like a more complete hormone and thyroid workup, including estradiol, progesterone, testosterone, a full thyroid panel, not only TSH, CMP, lipid panel, and CBC."*

3 Ask Politely If They Decline

If your doctor hesitates or says no, it's completely okay to ask: *"Is there a reason we wouldn't check these now?"* You are not being difficult — you are being your own best advocate.

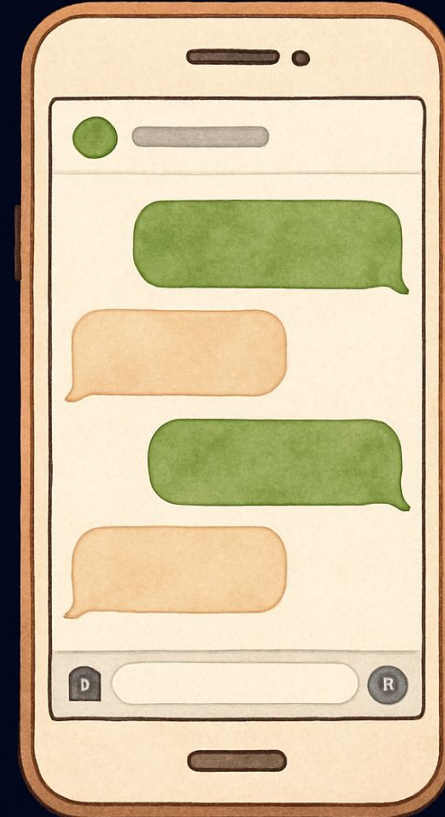
What If Your Doctor Won't Order the Labs?

Sometimes a provider declines to order certain tests, or you may not have easy access to a doctor right now. **That's okay — you still have options.**

If your doctor cannot or will not order these labs, **we are able to order them for you** directly. Results will be reviewed with you and explained in plain, understandable language.

i To get started: Send a **direct message in this group** and let us know you need help arranging lab work. We'll walk you through the next steps.

📄 This service complements — it does not replace — having a primary care provider. We encourage you to continue building that relationship.



You've Got This

Knowledge is power. Understanding your own hormone labs puts you in the driver's seat of your health — no shame, no confusion, just clarity.



Time It Right

Days 19–21 of your cycle for the most accurate hormone snapshot.



Request the Full Panel

Sex hormones, full thyroid, CMP, lipid panel, and CBC together.



Speak Up

Bring your list, describe your symptoms, and advocate for complete testing.



We're Here

If your doctor won't order labs, message us. You are not alone in this.

Your symptoms are real. Your questions deserve real answers. This guide is your starting point — keep it, share it, and use it.