

THE NEW
MOM'S GUIDE TO
**Getting It Back
Together**
(even if you never
had it in the
first place!)

mom•over

(noun) : MASHUP OF "MOM" AND "MAKEOVER"
minus the pressure to look like a **total babe 24/7.**

(Unless that's what the mama wants, of course.)

Holistic; **ENCOMPASSES MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT.**

Nudges her to take primo care of herself, with zero guilt
& tons of support. **BENEFICIAL TO ENTIRE FAMILY.**

dana wood

Foreword by **VERONICA WEBB**

Test Name	Frequency	Check ✓
Skin exam	Yearly, augmented by monthly self-exam	
Physical	Yearly	
TSH (Thyroid Stimulating Hormone)	Baseline at age thirty-five, every five years thereafter	

Above and Beyond: Other Screenings to Consider

In the interest of health, you could spend every waking minute—not to mention a small fortune—running from clinic to clinic, health guru to health guru, testing this, that, or the other body part. And believe me, when I've been in the throes of intense cyberchondria or in the midst of my skin-cancer scare, I've considered doing precisely that. But at least until I'm a little older, I've decided to keep a lid on it. My goal now is to raise my game, testwise, without creating a whole new miniobsession.

themotherload

"I've always been fastidious about my own health care—teeth cleaned two or three times a year, annual mammogram, yearly visit to the gyno. If I don't feel well, I address the problem as quickly as I can. My biggest concern is being healthy for my children. I had my son at forty and my daughter at forty-three. This year I'll turn fifty, and now that I have kids, I want to live to 100. I want to see them grow up and have families of their own."

—Gwen, mama of two

To that end, I asked Jeffrey Morrison, MD, a New York-based medical doctor who specializes in nutrition (for more on his

practice see the Dig Deeper Appendix), to compile a short list of the tests he thinks are crucial for all new moms. What's great is that, with the exception of the kidney function test, which entails forking over a cup of pee, each of these tests is conducted via blood sample. A vial or two of the red stuff and *voilà*, access to all the personal data Dr. Morrison says we should arm ourselves with to stay healthy.

"We all need to be proactive," says Dr. Morrison. "So definitely get these baseline tests, which are the minimum that I would recommend. Then, based on what's going on in your life, and what we see on your original test, we can take the next step, if necessary."

So here's your cheat sheet for extra-credit new-mama health, complete with the rationale behind each test:

- **Complete blood count:** Among other things, measures amounts of white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets. Can uncover immune-system issues as well as anemia, a common postpartum health woe.
- **Ferritin:** Checks level of ferritin, a protein in the body that binds to iron; can also uncover anemia.
- **Kidney function:** Determines whether the kidneys, which perform several vital tasks including removing waste from blood, balancing pH levels, and regulating internal water levels, are performing optimally.
- **Liver panel:** Consisting of seven tests run on the same blood sample; used to detect liver disease and assess overall liver health; often ordered for symptoms of fatigue.
- **Vitamin D:** Used to detect bone weakness as well as monitor diseases such as Crohn's and cystic fibrosis, which can obstruct the absorption of fat.
- **Vitamin B 12 and Folic Acid:** Can uncover anemia and nutritional deficiencies.

relax, you're fine

Basically, I want it both ways. While I insist that you move your own health to the top of the priority heap, keep up with all the standard maintenance screenings, and add a slew of other tests to the mix, I also don't want you to become *too* dialed in. It's important to strike a balance between having your head in the sand about what's going on with you physically and becoming a big old drama queen. I've done both, and I can tell you that neither extreme is a great place to be.

Unfortunately for mama Jeanine, she's morphed into a total hypochondriac since having her two boys. So for her, going to the doctor too much is a bigger problem than not going enough. "I find I'm more focused on death than ever before," she confides. "With every ache and pain I feel, I'm convinced it's cancer. And then I lie awake at night hoping I won't die before I'm at an age when they can remember Mommy. So I find myself going to the doctor for every small ailment."

Having a kid later in life really ups the ante on the worrying-about-mortality front. But because I'm so committed to getting a grip on my situational health anxiety—I say situational because it only surfaces when the word "biopsy" starts getting bandied about—I haven't included any of the big medical reference books in the Dig Deeper Appendix. Instead, I'm recommending another wildly popular tome (one of those big "You" books by docs Michael Roizen and Mehmet Oz), but one I feel is a lot more mental-health friendly.

By the way, if you think you might be tipping over into serious health-anxiety territory, I urge you to visit www.healthanxiety.homestead.com, the website of a recovering hypochondriac. She's been asymptomatic for years, but still maintains her site, which is filled with links, recommended reading, and her own poignant recovery tale, as a help to those in need. Hopefully, you're not one of them.

Although partnering with a trusted crew of medical experts is crucial for every new mama, it's only one piece of the total wellness puzzle. Another is getting moving again. If you're feeling okay and your doctor has given you the go-ahead, it's time to track down your workout gear. But don't fret, it's all about baby steps.