

Cholesterol: What You Need To Know

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance made by your liver and found in the food you eat.

- **HDL, high density lipoprotein, cholesterol**
HDL (the “good” cholesterol) helps to get rid of extra cholesterol from your blood. Higher levels of HDL may decrease your risk of heart disease.
- **LDL, low density lipoprotein, cholesterol**
When too much LDL (the “bad” cholesterol) builds up on your artery walls, plaque forms and blocks blood flow in vessels, which may cause heart disease and strokes.

Your blood test value will also include a **triglyceride** level. This is a type of fat in your bloodstream. High levels can increase your risk of heart disease.

Cholesterol Screening

You should have your cholesterol checked at age 20. Based on your test results, age and risk factors, your health care provider may recommend more testing. They will also tell you how often the test should be repeated.

See the cholesterol guidelines in the chart below.

Cholesterol Guidelines		
HDL (“good” cholesterol)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ men: 40 mg/dL or above ■ women: 50 mg/dL or above 	A higher HDL is desired to protect you against heart disease.
LDL (“bad” cholesterol)*	100 mg/dL or lower*	Guidelines for LDL are based on your overall risk for heart disease. Talk with your health care provider about your LDL goal.
Triglycerides	below 150 mg/dL	A lower triglyceride level puts you at decreased risk for heart disease.

*Guidelines for LDL are based on your overall risk for heart disease. If you have diabetes or heart disease, consider taking a statin medicine to protect your arteries. Talk with your health care provider about your LDL goal.

(over)

Heart Disease Risk Factors

The following are heart disease risk factors:

- age and gender:
 - men age 45 and older
 - women age 55 and older or women after menopause
- family history of heart disease
 - father or close male relatives younger than age 55
 - mother or close female relative younger than age 65
- cigarette smoking
- blood pressure of 130 or higher (top number) or 80 or higher (bottom number)
- low HDL cholesterol
 - men: HDL below 40
 - women: HDL below 50
- diabetes.

Your Test Results		
Test	Result	Date
HDL		
LDL		
Triglycerides		

Ways to Help Control Your Cholesterol

You can help control your cholesterol level in the following ways:

- Eat foods low in saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol. This includes:
 - vegetables and fruits
 - whole grains
 - fat-free or low-fat dairy products
 - lean protein such as chicken or turkey breast without the skin, fish, legumes (beans, lentils, peas) and soy
 - healthful oils (olive oil, canola oil, etc.) and nuts.

Limit red meats (especially processed meats), and sweets and sugar-sweetened beverages. Avoid eating “tropical” oils such as coconut, palm kernel and palm oils.

- Lose weight if you are overweight. This can lower your LDL level and raise your HDL level.
- Be physically active three to four times each week for a total of at least 150 minutes. This can also lower your LDL level.
- Take any medicine to lower your cholesterol as prescribed. Eating more healthful foods and increasing your activity level are often not enough to reach your cholesterol goals.

You may have a high cholesterol level and not yet have any signs of disease. Your health care provider will recommend how often to have your cholesterol level checked.