

# Cholesterol and Heart Disease

## Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance made by your liver and found in the food you eat. Your total cholesterol (lipid) blood test value contains three parts:

- HDL, high density lipoprotein, cholesterol (This is known as the “good” cholesterol.)
- LDL, low density lipoprotein, cholesterol (This is known as the “bad” cholesterol.)
- triglycerides (This is fat digested from foods that are released into your bloodstream. It either gives your body energy or is stored as fat.)

## The Importance of LDL and HDL

When too much LDL (the “bad” cholesterol) builds in your artery walls, plaque forms and can decrease blood flow in vessels leading to your heart, legs and brain. This can cause heart disease, peripheral vascular disease and strokes.

HDL (the “good” cholesterol) helps to get rid of extra cholesterol from your blood and tissues. Higher levels of HDL may protect your heart.

## Cholesterol Screenings

A cholesterol screening (lipid blood test) is a good way to check your blood cholesterol levels.

The American Heart Association recommends a cholesterol screening every 4 to 6 years, starting at age 20.

Your health care provider may recommend other testing or treatment if you have or are at an increased risk for heart disease or stroke, such as:

- age
- family history of heart disease
- high blood pressure
- diabetes
- low HDL and/or high LDL
- smoking.

Fill out the table on the other side and review it with your health care provider at your next appointment.

**(over)**

## Heart Disease Risk Factors

Check the box on the right for each risk factor that applies to you. Give yourself 1 point for each check.

<b>Age and sex</b> ■ Males age 45 or older ■ Females age 55 or older	
<b>Family history of heart disease</b> ■ Father or brother younger than age 55 ■ Mother or sister younger than age 65	
<b>Cigarette smoking</b>	
<b>High blood pressure</b>	
<b>HDL (“good”) cholesterol</b> ■ Males: less than 40 mg/dL ■ Females: less than 50 mg/dL	
<b>Diabetes</b>	

Your total number of risk factors: \_\_\_\_\_

If your HDL is more than 60 mg/dL, subtract one from your score.

Your final score: \_\_\_\_\_

## Your LDL Goals

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.

## Your Test Results

Test	Date	Result	Goal
Total cholesterol			
HDL			
LDL			
Triglycerides			

## How To Improve Your Cholesterol

The following tips can help to decrease your LDL (the “bad” cholesterol) and increase your HDL (the “good” cholesterol):

### Decrease LDL

- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Lower the saturated fat in your diet.
- Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day.
- Add more fiber to your diet.

### Increase HDL

- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Stop smoking if you smoke.
- Get at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week.