

What Do My Cholesterol Levels Mean?

High blood cholesterol signals a higher risk of heart attack and stroke. That's why it's important to have your cholesterol levels checked regularly and discuss them with your doctor. A "lipoprotein profile" is a test to find out your blood cholesterol numbers. It gives information about total cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol and HDL (good) cholesterol, as well as triglycerides (blood fats).

All of these are measured in milligrams per deciliter of blood (mg/dL).



Taking a small blood sample from a finger is one common way that cholesterol levels can be measured.

What should my total cholesterol level be?

Total Blood Cholesterol Levels:

Less than 200 mg/dL = Desirable—lower risk
 200 to 239 mg/dL = Borderline high—higher risk

240 mg/dL and above = High blood cholesterol—more than twice the risk as desirable level

What should my HDL cholesterol level be?

HDL stands for high-density lipoprotein. HDL is considered "good" cholesterol because it seems to lower your risk of heart attack and stroke. That means that — unlike other cholesterol levels — the higher your HDL, the better.

You can raise your HDL by quitting smoking, losing excess weight and being more active. If you make healthful lifestyle changes, you

can raise your HDL and reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke.

HDL Cholesterol Levels:

Less than 40 mg/dL = Low HDL cholesterol—higher risk
 40 to 59 mg/dL = The higher your HDL level, the better
 60 mg/dL and above = High HDL cholesterol—lower risk

What should my LDL cholesterol level be?

LDL stands for low-density lipoprotein. This is the main carrier of harmful cholesterol in your blood. A high level of LDL cholesterol means there's a higher risk of heart disease and stroke. The lower your LDL cholesterol is, the lower your risk will be.

LDL Cholesterol Levels:

Less than 100 mg/dL = Optimal for people with heart disease or diabetes
 100 to 129 mg/dL = Near or above optimal

130 to 159 mg/dL = Borderline high

160 to 189 mg/dL = High

190 mg/dL and above = Very High

What should my triglyceride level be?

Triglycerides are the most common type of fat in your body. They're also a major energy source. They come from food, and your body also makes them. As people get older, gain excess weight or both, their triglyceride and cholesterol levels tend to rise.

Many people who have heart disease or diabetes have high fasting triglyceride levels. Some studies have shown that people with

above-normal fasting triglyceride levels (150 mg/dL or higher) have a higher risk of heart disease and stroke.

Triglyceride Levels:

Less than 150 mg/dL = Normal

150 to 199 mg/dL = Borderline high

200-499 mg/dL = High

190 mg/dL and above = Very High

My Cholesterol and Triglyceride Levels

Use the chart below to keep track of your cholesterol and triglyceride levels each time you have a test. Make sure you discuss these numbers with your doctor.

	My Goal	1st Visit	2nd Visit	3rd Visit
Total blood cholesterol level	_____	_____	_____	_____
HDL cholesterol level	_____	_____	_____	_____
LDL cholesterol level	_____	_____	_____	_____
Triglyceride level	_____	_____	_____	_____

How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or health care professional. Or call your local American Heart Association at 1-800-242-8721, or the American Stroke Association at 1-888-478-7653.
 - If you have high cholesterol, members of your family also may be at higher risk for it. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
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Do you have questions or comments for your doctor?

- Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your doctor. For example:

What about other fats?

How often should I have my levels checked?



Fighting Heart Disease and Stroke

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