



What is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy substance found in all body cells. Our bodies use cholesterol to digest food, make hormones, build cell walls, and perform other important functions.

Where Does Cholesterol Come From?

Our bodies make cholesterol in the liver. Dietary cholesterol comes only from animal products such as meat, dairy, eggs, and animal fats.

If blood cholesterol is too high, we can have health problems such as narrowing or blocking of blood vessels, heart disease, and strokes.

Measuring Blood Cholesterol

What is my Cholesterol level? _____

- ♥ 200 or less is desirable. If your level is <200, ask your healthcare provider when you should have it rechecked.
- ♥ 200-239 means you are at moderate risk for heart disease and stroke, especially if you have other risk factors such as obesity or high blood pressure, if you are a smoker, or if you have family history of heart disease.
- ♥ 240+ means you are at high risk for developing heart disease. Ask your healthcare provider what you can do to lower your cholesterol.

LDL and HDL (parts of total cholesterol)

Low Density Lipoprotein (LDL)

What is my LDL level? _____

LDL cholesterol is deposited on artery walls. They cause a waxy buildup called plaque. It is known as "*bad cholesterol*."

- ♥ Optimal LDL levels are <100 mg/dl or lower if you have heart disease or diabetes or other risk factors (such as family history of heart disease, or if you smoke)
- ♥ Optimal LDL levels are <130 mg/dl if you have no risk factors for heart disease

How Can I Lower My LDL Level?

- ♥ Lose weight if you are overweight.
- ♥ Reduce saturated fat found in dairy products, cheese, and meat.
- ♥ Reduce hydrogenated fats (trans fats) found in French fries, snack crackers, cookies, baking mixes, shortening, butter, and stick margarine.
- ♥ Use monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats such as canola, olive, safflower, and sunflower oils when cooking.

High Density Lipoprotein (HDL)

What is my HDL level? _____

HDL takes extra cholesterol out of the body and is called "*good cholesterol*".

- ♥ Desirable HDL levels are >40 mg/dl
- ♥ Optimal levels are >60
- ♥ A level of 60 or more is considered protective against heart disease

To raise your HDL level:

- ♥ Lose weight if you are overweight.
- ♥ Exercise regularly (consult your healthcare provider before beginning an exercise program).
- ♥ Don't smoke.
- ♥ Replace saturated fat with unsaturated fats.

What about Triglycerides?

What is my Triglyceride level? _____

Triglycerides are a fat that the body makes from alcohol, sugar, or excess calories. High triglyceride levels may add to buildup of plaque in the blood vessels (atherosclerosis). High triglycerides are a risk factor for heart disease.

Triglyceride Levels

Normal	Under 150
Borderline High	150-199
High	200-499
Very High	500 or more

Triglycerides can be decreased by the following:

- ♥ Weight loss
- ♥ Regular physical activity
- ♥ Decrease or avoid alcohol
- ♥ Decrease sugar-containing foods