



# Cholesterol

## WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?

Cholesterol is a waxy substance found in the fats (lipids) in your blood. Your body needs cholesterol, but having a high level of cholesterol, also called hypercholesterolemia can increase your risk for heart disease.

### TOTAL CHOLESTEROL

Less than 200 mg/dL	Desirable
200 - 239 mg/dL	Borderline High
240 mg/dL and over	High

### HIGH-DENSITY LIPOPROTEIN (HDL)

60 mg/dL and over	Lowers your chance for heart disease
Less than 40 mg/dL (for men)	May increase your risk for heart disease
Less than 50 mg/dL (for women)	



## WHAT DO THE NUMBERS MEAN?

**Total cholesterol** measures all the cholesterol in your blood, including low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL).

**LDL** or “bad cholesterol,” can build up in your blood vessels causing them to get clogged.

**HDL** or “good cholesterol” helps clear bad cholesterol from your blood so it does not clog your blood vessels.

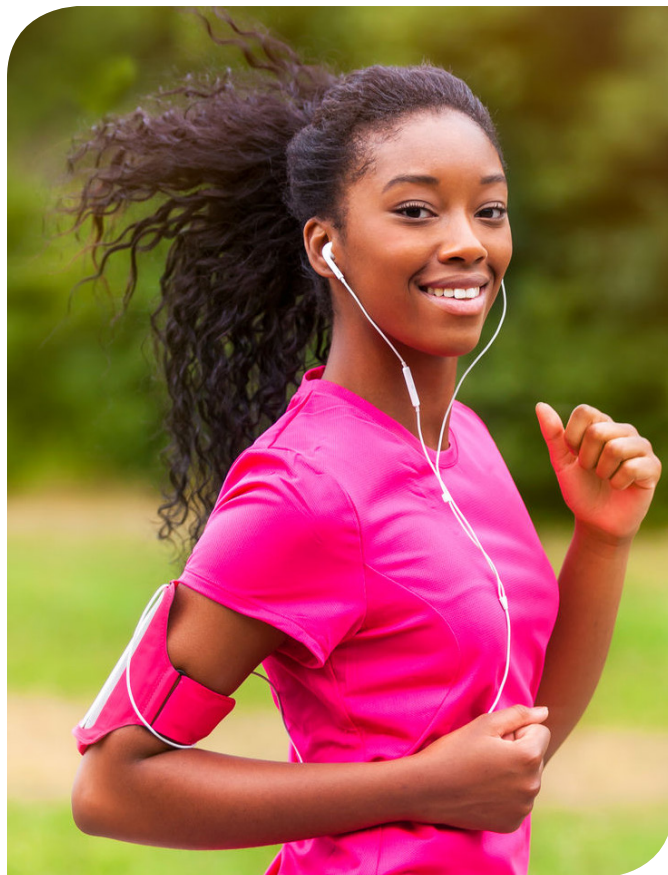
When it comes to HDL cholesterol a higher number means a lower risk for heart disease, unlike LDL and total cholesterol where a higher number may increase your risk for heart disease.

Cholesterol is only one factor in determining your risk for heart disease. Other factors that are important in assessing your risk are your age, family history, weight, diet, activity level, blood pressure and smoking history. Talk to your health care provider to determine your individual risk for heart disease.



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## What can I do to lower my cholesterol?



### CHOOSE FOODS THAT ARE GOOD FOR YOUR HEART

Apples, pears, dried beans, oats and barley contain soluble fiber which can lower cholesterol.

Good fats like avocados, olive and canola oil, walnuts and almonds, tofu and fish high in omega-3 fatty acids like salmon and tuna protect your heart and support overall health.

### BE ACTIVE AND LOSE WEIGHT IF YOU'RE OVERWEIGHT

Regular physical activity can lower LDL and raise HDL cholesterol. Aim to be active for 30 minutes each day. Break up your daily activity into three 10-minute segments if it is easier.

Being overweight is a risk factor for heart disease and raises cholesterol levels. Losing weight can lower total and LDL and raise HDL cholesterol.

### IF YOU SMOKE, QUIT

Quitting smoking can raise HDL cholesterol by up to 10 percent.

## Try This Heart Healthy CHOCOLATE MOUSSE Recipe!

### DARK CHOCOLATE AVOCADO MOUSSE

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 ripe avocado, skin and pit removed
- 3½ tablespoons dark chocolate cocoa powder
- Add up to 3½ tablespoons of honey depending on how sweet you like your mousse

#### INSTRUCTIONS

Place avocado and dark chocolate cocoa powder in food processor. Add honey.

Process avocado, cocoa powder and honey for approximately 1 minute, pausing to scrape the sides, or until a thick, smooth mousse forms.

Spoon mousse into a small bowl and top with slivered almonds or fresh fruit.

For more information visit [www.harvardpilgrim.org](http://www.harvardpilgrim.org)