

Get the Facts on:

Cholesterol

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What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a type of fat found in your blood. Your body uses cholesterol for many reasons, but a high level of cholesterol, also called hypercholesterolemia, can lead to serious problems, such as a heart attack or stroke.

Total Cholesterol

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

Your Total Cholesterol: _____

Date: _____

High-Density Lipoprotein (HDL)

| | |
|--|--|
| 60 mg/dL and over | Desirable – lowers your chance for a heart attack or stroke. |
| 40 to 60 mg/dL | Acceptable |
| Less than 40 mg/dL (for men) Less than 50 mg/dL (for women) | High Risk – may raise your chance for heart disease. |

Your HDL Cholesterol: _____

Date: _____

What are the different types of cholesterol?

- **High-Density Lipoprotein (HDL)**, or “good cholesterol” helps clear bad cholesterol from your blood so it does not clog your blood vessels.
- **Low-Density Lipoprotein (LDL)** or “bad cholesterol,” can build up in your blood vessels causing them to get clogged. This raises your chance for a heart attack or stroke.

What do the numbers mean?

The higher your total cholesterol reading, the greater your chance of developing heart disease. But, unlike total cholesterol, the higher your HDL cholesterol reading, the lower your chance of developing heart disease.

What steps can I take to improve my cholesterol levels?

- ➔ Eat a heart-healthy diet.
- ➔ Stay active - try to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day for most days of the week.
- ➔ If you are overweight, lose weight.
- ➔ If you smoke, quit.

What changes can I make to my diet?

➔ Eat heart-healthy fish.

Choose fish high in Omega-3 fatty acids like mackerel, tuna, and salmon. Try eating fish twice per week. Looking for a less fishy source of Omega-3? Try adding flax seed oil to recipes or eat eggs with Omega-3 fatty acids.

➔ Choose low cholesterol foods.

Limit saturated fats and avoid trans fats.

➔ Choose low fat dairy products.

Use 1% or skim milk, fat-free yogurt, low fat cheeses and cottage cheese, low fat ice cream and frozen yogurt.

➔ Include fiber in your diet.

Good sources include oatmeal, fruits, vegetables and beans. Women should try to eat at least 21 to 25 grams of fiber a day while men should aim for 30-38 grams a day.

➔ Choose lean cuts of meat like beef and pork that end in "loin."

Remove the skin from chicken and turkey.

➔ Choose a variety of whole grain products.

Whole wheat bread, pasta and rice are good choices.

➔ Choose healthier fats.

Canola and olive oil are two excellent options.

Questions to ask your doctor

- What is my total cholesterol level?
- What is my LDL level?
- What is my HDL level?
- What is my triglyceride level?
- What are my cholesterol level goals?
- What would be a healthy weight for me?
- Is it safe for me to exercise regularly?
- Should I take a cholesterol medication?

Where can I find out more about cholesterol and staying healthy?

Visit www.harvardpilgrim.org/wellness to:

- › Search *Health Topics A-Z* for up-to-date health and wellness information.
- › Find your own way to well-being with *My Way to Better*.
- › Learn about mindfulness meditation and its health benefits including lowering cholesterol.

