

Know ALL of Your Cholesterol Numbers

Cholesterol is defined as a waxy fat-like substance that occurs naturally in the human body. Your body needs some cholesterol to help it work properly at a cellular level. Excess cholesterol in your blood sticks to the walls of the arteries and is referred to as plaque. Plaque gradually narrows arteries and can eventually block them completely. If a blocked artery leads to the heart a heart attack can occur, and if it leads to the brain a stroke can occur. More than a million Americans die of heart disease each year.

The American Heart Association, along with the National Cholesterol Education Association, suggests that *total* blood cholesterol level should be:

- < 200 mg/dL ~ normal blood cholesterol
- 200-239 mg/dL ~ borderline-high
- > 240 mg/dL ~ high cholesterol.

Cholesterol Level Chart

This blood cholesterol chart shows what your blood cholesterol levels should be and includes low and high cholesterol level measurements

Blood Cholesterol Level Chart	Desirable	Borderline (high)	High Risk
Total Cholesterol	< 200	200-240	> 240
Triglycerides	< 150	150-500	> 500
Low Density Cholesterol	< 130	130-160	> 240
High Density Cholesterol	> 50	50-35	< 35

Eighty-percent of the cholesterol in your body is produced by the liver, and the rest comes from foods like meats, eggs and dairy products. The biggest influence on blood cholesterol level is dietary fat, and what really matters is the "type" of fat you eat. There are two types of fats, "good fat" which are monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. These fats actually lower the risk of disease such as heart disease and atherosclerosis. "Bad fats" are saturated and trans fats and work to increase the risk for certain diseases. The key to healthy eating is to substitute the *bad* fats for the *good* fats, and to avoid *trans* fats.

Cholesterol is insoluble in blood and is transported in the body's circulatory system within lipoproteins.

There is a large range of lipoproteins within blood, generally called, from larger to smaller size: chylomicrons, very low density lipoprotein (VLDL), intermediate density lipoprotein (IDL), low density lipoprotein (LDL) and high density lipoprotein (HDL). The actual cholesterol within all the various lipoproteins is identical.

LDL = bad cholesterol and HDL = good cholesterol

How is Cholesterol Measured?

The measurement of blood cholesterol level and other blood fats is obtained with a simple blood test after fasting for 12 hours. Blood is taken and sent to a laboratory, where the number of milligrams of cholesterol in the blood is determined.

Testing Cholesterol Levels in the Blood - How often Should you be Tested?

It is recommended by the American Heart Association to test cholesterol every 5 years for people aged 20 years or older.

Cholesterol level testing should be more frequent if a person: is a man over age 45 or a woman over age 50, has total cholesterol of 200 mg/dL or more, has HDL (good) cholesterol less than 40 mg/dL, or is at risk of heart disease and stroke.

Reducing your Cholesterol Chart Levels

If you have had your cholesterol level tested and according to the doctors cholesterol chart you are told you have high blood cholesterol you should look at ways of lowering your cholesterol levels; exercise, eating a variety of fruits and vegetables daily, and taking cholesterol lowering medication if it recommended by your doctor. Some research suggests it can be lowered by doing mind & body exercise such as yoga as these efforts promote the relaxation response within your body.

Research has also shown that flaxseed and niacin have been proven to lower cholesterol. Red rice extract has also shown that it has cholesterol lowering properties.

Read more by visiting the American Heart Association's website:

<http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/>
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