



Numbers Make a Difference

Your cholesterol numbers make a difference in your health

What is cholesterol? Why does it matter to me?

There are several types of cholesterol. Bad cholesterol is called LDL. LDL is considered “bad” because it sticks to the walls of your arteries, and clogs up the blood flow. LDL can turn into plaque, which causes heart attacks and stroke. LDL comes from animal fat, and high LDL levels cause heart attacks and stroke. You can get LDL from beef, pork, skin-on turkey and chicken, lard and whole fat dairy products like cheese.

Good cholesterol is called HDL. It cleans your arteries like a vacuum cleaner. HDL protects you against heart disease. You can raise your HDL by getting exercise, getting “good” fats like olive oil, canola oil, nuts and seeds in your diet and even drinking one glass of wine each day.

What about triglycerides?

Triglycerides come from the sugar in the foods you eat and drink, including alcohol. There is a lot of sugar in sodas, candy, processed foods, cake and cookies. But also white bread, white rice, potatoes and fast food can raise triglycerides. High triglycerides can also lead to diabetes.

How do I know if I have high cholesterol?

A simple blood test will give you your cholesterol and triglyceride levels. You should have this test at least every five years; more often if your numbers are elevated. There are many places to have this test done, such as:

- your doctor’s office
- stores and pharmacies often offer cholesterol tests throughout the year
- a health fair or a community health worker

What happens if I just ignore this?

- you can have a stroke
- you can have a heart attack

How can I avoid high cholesterol?

- **Eat more!** Eat more fruits and vegetables, whole grains and grain products, beans and peas, fat-free and low-fat milk products, lean meats and poultry without skin, fish, and nuts and seeds.
- **Eat foods that have little or no saturated or trans fats.** All food companies have to tell you how much saturated fat is in one serving. That amount is right under the words Total Fat in the nutrition facts panel.
- **Prepare differently.** Bake or grill your food.
- **If you do not exercise, start.** Try to move 30 minutes a day. You can do this by walking, playing with your kids or even dancing. Do something fun!





Cholesterol Numbers

(continued)

Here are my numbers, now what?

These numbers, the good and the bad ones, can be confusing. Here's what they mean:

Total cholesterol

less than 120	GOOD	good for you!
200-239	borderline high	depending on your other risk factors, you may be at a higher risk for heart disease
240 or more	high	you are at risk for clogged arteries and a heart attack

LDL cholesterol* — this is the bad, sticky kind, keep this number low!

less than 130	OPTIMAL	you are doing everything right, keep it up!
100-129	near optimal	make some simple changes and get below 100
130-159	borderline high	changes in your diet and exercise are needed
160-189	high	talk to your doctor about lowering your health risks
190 or more	very high	talk to your doctor soon!

HDL cholesterol — this is the good, cleaning kind, the higher the better!

women	50 or more
men	40 or more

Triglycerides

keep this number below 150

