



Cholesterol



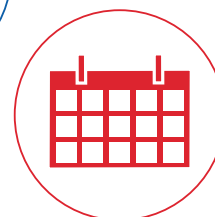
Cholesterol is a type of fat (lipid) in your blood that your cells need to function. You get cholesterol from your body and the food you eat. If you have too much cholesterol, it starts to build up in your arteries and that buildup can narrow your arteries making it harder for blood to flow through them. Your heart may not get as much oxygen-rich blood as it needs, which increases the risk of a heart attack. Additionally, decreased blood flow to your brain can cause a stroke.

There are two types of cholesterol:

- **LDL** is the “lousy” or “bad” cholesterol. LDL is the kind that can raise your risk of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.
- **HDL** is the “happy” or “good” cholesterol. HDL is the kind that is linked to a lower risk of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.

What affects cholesterol levels?

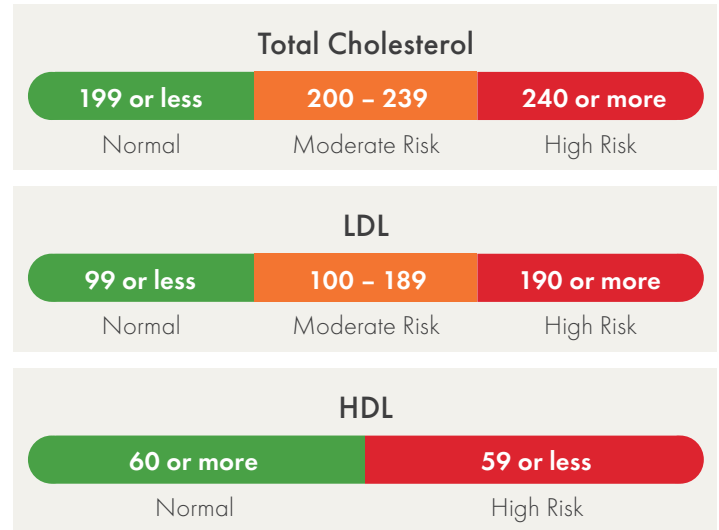
- **The foods you eat.** Eating too much saturated and trans fat can raise your cholesterol.
- **Being overweight.** This may lower HDL (“good”) cholesterol.
- **Being inactive.** Not exercising may lower HDL (“good”) cholesterol.
- **Age.** Cholesterol starts to rise after age 20.
- **Family history.** If family members have or had high cholesterol, you may also have it.



What should my numbers be?

Check in with your medical provider to learn what your preferred numbers should be. In general, people who do not already have heart disease should aim for:

- **Total cholesterol below 200**
- **LDL cholesterol below 130** – or much lower, if you are at risk of heart attacks or strokes
- **HDL cholesterol above 60**
- **Non-HDL cholesterol below 160** – or lower, if you are at risk of heart attacks or strokes
- **Triglycerides below 150**



Take action

You can reduce your risk for high cholesterol by living a heart-healthy lifestyle and with medication. The way you choose to lower your risk will depend on how high your risk is for heart attack and stroke. It will also depend on how you feel about taking medication. Your doctor can help you know your risk and balance the benefits and risks of your treatment options.

Heart-healthy lifestyle changes can help lower risk for everyone. They include:

- **Eating a heart-healthy diet** that is rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, and low-fat or non-fat dairy foods.
- **Being active** on most, if not all, days of the week.
- **Losing weight** if you need to, and staying at a healthy weight.
- **Not using** tobacco products.

Changing old habits may not be easy, but it is very important to help you live a healthier and longer life. We're here to help.



Meet with your health coach to develop a personalized health plan to set and meet your goals.
Make a health coaching appointment today!