

TOTAL SERUM CHOLESTEROL LEVEL

120-199 mg/dL	Desirable
200-239 mg/dL	Borderline high
240 mg/dL or higher	High

“BAD” CHOLESTEROL (LDL)

Less than 100 mg/dL	Optimal
100-129 mg/dL	Near optimal/ above optimal
130-159 mg/dL	Borderline high
160-189 mg/dL	High
190 mg/dL or higher	Very high

TRIGLYCERIDES

25-149 mg/dL	Normal
150-199 mg/dL	Borderline high
200-499 mg/dL	High
500 mg/dL or higher	Very high

Remember, your doctor will look at your numbers and decide on an LDL cholesterol goal for you. Always ask what your cholesterol goal numbers mean, based on your complete health history.

“GOOD” CHOLESTEROL (HDL)

Optimal For Men:	40mg/dL or higher
Optimal For Women:	50 mg/dL or higher

Source: National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP)



UNDERSTANDING CHOLESTEROL



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WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?

Cholesterol is a type of fat (a lipid) that is made in your liver, found in all the cells in your body, and also found in some foods, such as egg yolks, meat, chicken, fish, butter, cheese, and whole milk. Foods from plants – like fruits and vegetables – and some cereals do not have cholesterol. Some foods with trans-fats or saturated fats may cause your body to make more of its own cholesterol.

Cholesterol circulates through your body in your bloodstream and is critical in building cells and in creating certain hormones.

- LDL cholesterol is medically known as low-density lipoprotein cholesterol and sometimes referred to as the “bad” cholesterol. LDL is a lipoprotein and is carried through the bloodstream. Its job is to transport cholesterol to body tissue where the cholesterol is used, primarily, to repair cell membranes. LDL is necessary for body functioning, yet in excessive or high amounts can lead to the dangerous build-up of cholesterol (fat) in your artery walls.
- HDL cholesterol is known by your doctor as high-density lipoprotein cholesterol. HDL cholesterol is sometimes referred to as the “good” cholesterol. Like LDL, HDL is a lipoprotein and is carried through the bloodstream. Its job is to transport the bad cholesterol to your liver where it is broken down, and you can then eliminate it from your body. HDL is considered “good” because it cleans up excess fats.

WHAT ARE TRIGLYCERIDES?

Triglycerides, like cholesterol, are a fat (lipid). Triglycerides are derived from fats you eat in food or created by your body from sources like carbohydrates. When you eat a meal, the calories you eat are either immediately used for energy or your body converts them to triglycerides and stores in fat tissues. Between meals, your hormones tell your body if you need energy. If you do, the hormones release the triglycerides from your fat tissues and provide you with energy.

Triglycerides are primarily transported through another lipoprotein called VLDL (very low-density lipoprotein). Like cholesterol, moderate and balanced amounts of triglycerides have an important function in your body, but high triglyceride levels may add to the risk for coronary artery disease.

Blood cholesterol levels are measured in milligrams per deciliter of blood (mg/dL).

The National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP), developed by the National Institutes of Health, has set guidelines for total cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol, and triglycerides. These guidelines put cholesterol numbers in different heart disease risk categories, ranging from normal to very high. While this gives you an idea of where your numbers fall, remember that the same numbers can mean different things for different people. Your risk from high cholesterol is a combination of many factors. Your doctor will look at your numbers and decide on an LDL cholesterol goal for you. Always ask what your cholesterol numbers mean, based on your complete health history.