

Know Your Cholesterol Numbers

TOTAL CHOLESTEROL RANGE	
Optimal	Lower than 200 mg/dL
Borderline	200-239 mg/dL
High	240 mg/dL or higher

LDL (BAD) CHOLESTEROL RANGE	
Optimal	Lower than 100 mg/dL
Borderline	130-159 mg/dL
High	160 mg/dL or higher

HDL (GOOD) CHOLESTEROL RANGE		
	At Risk	Desirable
MEN	Lower than 40 mg/dL	60 mg/dL or higher
WOMEN	Lower than 50 mg/dL	60 mg/dL or higher

TRIGLYCERIDES RANGE	
Optimal	Lower than 150 mg/dL
Borderline	150-199 mg/dL
High	200 mg/dL or higher

Cholesterol is a fatty substance found in your body's cells. Cholesterol helps your body make important vitamins and hormones, but too much cholesterol can lead to plaque buildup inside your blood vessels. This sticky substance causes your arteries to harden and narrow, which limits blood flow. These blockages can cause a heart attack or, if located in the brain, a stroke.

Total cholesterol is the amount of cholesterol circulating in your blood. It is calculated as follows:
 $HDL + LDL + 20\% \text{ Triglycerides} = \text{Total Cholesterol}$.

HDL stands for **high-density lipoprotein**. HDL is the "good" cholesterol that moves extra cholesterol from your bloodstream to your liver to be cleared from your body. When you see HDL, think of "H" for "helpful." Your HDL is the one number in your lipid panel that you want to be high, as it can lower your risk for heart disease and stroke.

LDL stands for **low-density lipoprotein**. LDL is the "bad" cholesterol that contributes to plaque buildup in your arteries. You need some LDLs to carry cholesterol to your body's cells, but having too many can cause health problems.

Triglycerides are a type of fat in your blood that your body uses for energy. The combination of high levels of triglycerides with low HDL and/or high LDL cholesterol levels can increase your risk for health problems.

Knowing your cholesterol numbers is a key piece in determining your overall risk for heart disease and stroke. Talk to your healthcare provider about how often your cholesterol should be screened and other steps you should take to lower your risk of cardiovascular disease.