



Cholesterol: Know your numbers

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a fat-like lipid found in your blood and all of your body's cells. It cannot be exercised away or burned for energy like fat can be.

How is cholesterol measured?

A cholesterol test measures the amount of two types of cholesterol and one fat in your blood. These three numbers are important to review in determining your risk for heart disease and stroke.

- + **LDL** (low-density lipoprotein) is bad cholesterol that can clog your arteries and increase the risk of heart disease.
- + **HDL** (high-density lipoprotein) is good cholesterol that keeps your arteries clear of buildup and decreases the risk of heart disease.
- + **Triglycerides** are a type of bad fat that can clog your arteries.

What affects my cholesterol numbers?

There are many things that can affect your cholesterol numbers. Some of these things include the food you eat, weight and your family history.

Cholesterol levels

	Optimal	Above optimal	Borderline high	High
Total cholesterol	Below 200		200–239	Above 240
LDL cholesterol (bad)	Below 100	100–129	130–159	Above 160
Triglycerides (lower is better)	Below 150		150–199	Above 200

	Optimal	Below optimal	Low
HDL cholesterol (good)	60+	40–59	Below 40

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	Exercise regularly	Stops smoking	Reduce fat intake	Reduce sugar intake	Lose weight	Limit alcohol	Increase fiber	Manage stress
To increase HDL	✓	✓			✓			✓
To lower LDL	✓		✓		✓		✓	
To lower triglycerides	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		

How foods affect cholesterol

What can I do to improve my cholesterol?

- + Exercise and maintain a healthy weight.
- + Don't smoke.
- + Eat a healthy diet by limiting foods with fat, high cholesterol, sodium and added sugars.
- + Improve the quality of the fats you choose. Decrease saturated and trans fat, and increase healthier sources of fat, including monounsaturated fats and omega-3 fatty acids.

	Type of fat	Food sources	Effects on blood cholesterol
AVOID	Saturated fat (5-6% of total calories, 13g per day on average if you need to lower your cholesterol)	Animal fats – fatty beef, pork, lamb, veal, lard, beef fat, milk fat, bacon fat, butter, cheese, cream cheese, half and half, sour cream, coconut, palm, palm kernel oil	↑ Total cholesterol ↓ LDL cholesterol ↑ HDL cholesterol
	Trans fat (Limit to 2% of total calories or less)	Stick margarine, hydrogenated oils, solid shortening, many cookies and pastries, many fried foods	↑ Total cholesterol ↑ LDL cholesterol ↓ HDL cholesterol
MODERATION	Cholesterol	Egg yolks, liver, organ meats, shellfish (shrimp 40–50 mg/ounce)	↑ Total cholesterol when ingested with saturated fat, or when included in your diet in high amounts (> 200 mg/day)
	Polyunsaturated fat Omega-6 fatty acids	Safflower, corn, soybean and sunflower oils, walnuts, pine nuts, seeds, soft or tub margarines, mayonnaise, salad	↓ Total cholesterol ↓ LDL cholesterol ↑ Potential for inflammation
INCLUDE	Monounsaturated	Olive, canola or peanut oils, olives, natural nut butters, avocados, almonds, cashews, pistachios, pecans, hazelnuts	↓ Total cholesterol ↓ LDL cholesterol ↑ HDL cholesterol ↓ Triglycerides
	Omega-3 fatty acids	Salmon, herring, anchovies, sardines, mackerel, fatty fish, flax and chia seeds, nuts	↓ Triglycerides ↓ Clot formation ↓ Inflammation ↓ Vasoconstriction