

Cholesterol Goals

It seems like everyone is talking about “good” cholesterol, “bad” cholesterol, total cholesterol, and triglycerides. Knowing how they affect your overall health is important in understanding what these numbers mean.

Bad cholesterol

Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) also is known as “bad” cholesterol. LDL is necessary in your body. However, high levels of LDL cholesterol can build up in your artery walls and contribute to heart attacks.

Good cholesterol

High-density lipoprotein (HDL) also is known as “good” cholesterol. High levels of HDL cholesterol actually may help to clear away the damaging LDL cholesterol.

Triglycerides

Fats in your blood that increase after you eat are known as triglycerides. High triglycerides in your blood in the presence of high LDL cholesterol increase your risk of heart disease.

Total cholesterol

LDL, HDL, and triglyceride levels make up the total cholesterol number. It is important that you know your numbers; so, ask your doctor to share the number with you and keep a record for reference. You want to see if the number is trending up or down, or if it is staying level.

Total cholesterol goal

Total Cholesterol Level	Category
Less than 200 mg/dL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Desirable level that puts you at lower risk for coronary heart disease• Cholesterol level of 200 mg/dL or higher raises your risk
200-239 mg/dL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Borderline high
240 mg/dL or higher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High blood cholesterol• A person with this level has more than twice the risk of coronary heart disease as someone whose cholesterol is below 200 mg/dL

dL=deciliter, mg=milligrams

HDL cholesterol goal

HDL Cholesterol Level	Category
Less than 40 mg/dL for men; less than 50 mg/dL for women	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low HDL cholesterol• A major risk factor for heart disease
60 mg/dL and higher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High HDL cholesterol• An HDL of 60 mg/dL and higher is considered protective against heart disease

dL=deciliter, mg=milligrams

LDL cholesterol goal

LDL Cholesterol Level	Category
Less than 100 mg/dL	• Optimal
100-129 mg/dL	• Near or above optimal
130-159 mg/dL	• Borderline high
160-189 mg/dL	• High
190 mg/dL and higher	• Very high

dL=deciliter, mg=milligrams

Your LDL cholesterol goal depends on how many other risk factors you have. To learn more about risk factors, visit: <http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/atpii/calculator.asp?usertype=pub>.

LDL cholesterol goals:

- If you do not have coronary heart disease or diabetes and have one or no risk factors, your LDL goal is less than 160 mg/dL
- If you do not have coronary heart disease or diabetes and have two or more risk factors, your LDL goal is less than 130 mg/dL
- If you do have coronary heart disease or diabetes, your LDL goal is less than 100 mg/dL

Triglyceride goal

Triglyceride Level	Category
Less than 150 mg/dL	• Normal
150-199 mg/dL	• Borderline high
200-499 mg/dL	• High
500 mg/dL and higher	• Very high

dL=deciliter, mg=milligrams

Recommendations

Follow these recommendations:

- Reduce saturated fat, *trans* fat, cholesterol, and total fat in your diet
- Control high blood pressure with diet and exercise, under a physician's care
- Avoid tobacco smoke
- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise regularly
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Monitor diabetic risk or manage diabetes
- Take any prescription medications your physician recommends to regulate your cholesterol, and continue with all of the above recommendations

Reference

American Heart Association. What is cholesterol? Available at:

<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3046103>. Accessed February 11, 2009.

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