

## What Do Your Cholesterol Numbers Mean?

- **Total cholesterol**
- **LDL (bad) cholesterol** – the main source of cholesterol buildup and blockage in the arteries
- **HDL (good) cholesterol** – helps keep cholesterol from building up in the arteries
- **Triglycerides** – another form of fat in your blood

See how your cholesterol numbers compare to the tables below.

Total Cholesterol Level	Category
Less than 200 mg/dL	Desirable
200-239 mg/dL	Borderline high
240 mg/dL and above	High

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

*\*Cholesterol levels are measured in milligrams (mg) of cholesterol per deciliter (dL) of blood.*

**HDL** (good) cholesterol protects against heart disease, so for HDL, higher numbers are better. A level less than 40 mg/dL is low and is considered a major risk factor because it increases your risk for developing heart disease. HDL levels of 60 mg/dL or more help to lower your risk for heart disease.

**Triglycerides** can also raise heart disease risk. Levels that are borderline high (150-199 mg/dL) or high (200 mg/dL or more) may need treatment in some people.

## What Affects Cholesterol Levels?

A variety of things can affect cholesterol levels. These are things you can do something about:

- **Diet.** Saturated fat and cholesterol in the food you eat make your blood cholesterol level go up. Saturated fat is the main culprit, but cholesterol in foods also matters. Reducing the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol in your diet helps lower your blood cholesterol level.
- **Weight.** Being overweight is a risk factor for heart disease. It also tends to increase your cholesterol. Losing weight can help lower your LDL and total cholesterol levels, as well as raise your HDL and lower your triglyceride levels.
- **Physical Activity.** Not being physically active is a risk factor for heart disease. Regular physical activity can help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and raise HDL (good) cholesterol levels. It also helps you lose weight. You should try to be physically active for 30 minutes on most, if not all, days.

Things you cannot do anything about also can affect cholesterol levels. These include:

- **Age and Gender.** As women and men get older, their cholesterol levels rise. Before the age of menopause, women have lower total cholesterol levels than men of the same age. After the age of menopause, women's LDL levels tend to rise.
- **Heredity.** Your genes partly determine how much cholesterol your body makes. High blood cholesterol can run in families.





## Lowering Cholesterol With Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes (TLC)

TLC is a set of things you can do to help lower your LDL cholesterol. The main parts of TLC are:

**The TLC Diet.** This is a low-saturated-fat, low-cholesterol eating plan that calls for less than 7% of calories from saturated fat and less than 200 mg of dietary cholesterol per day. The TLC diet recommends only enough calories to maintain a desirable weight and avoid weight gain. If your LDL is not lowered enough by reducing saturated fat and cholesterol intakes, the amount of soluble fiber in your diet can be increased. Certain food products that contain plant stanols or plant sterols (for example, cholesterol-lowering margarines and salad dressings) can also be added to the TLC diet to boost its LDL-lowering power.

**Weight Management.** Losing weight if you are overweight can help lower LDL and is especially important for those with a cluster of risk factors that includes high triglyceride and/or low HDL levels and being overweight with a large waist measurement (more than 40 inches for men and more than 35 inches for women).

**Physical Activity.** Regular physical activity (30 minutes on most, if not all, days) is recommended for everyone. It can help raise HDL and lower LDL and is especially important for those with high triglyceride and/or low HDL levels who are overweight with a large waist measurement.

**To get the nutrients you need, you have to eat a variety of foods. After determining your dietary goals with your doctor, adjust the number and size of portions to reach and stay at your healthy body weight.**

Food Groups	Choose	Go Easy On	Avoid
<b>Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans (dry beans and tofu are meat substitutes), eggs and nuts</b> (up to 5 ounces of meat, poultry, fish/day)	Lean cuts of meat with fat trimmed, chicken and turkey without skin, fish, egg whites, cholesterol-free egg substitutes	Shellfish, goose, duck, egg yolks (2 egg yolks per week), nuts	Processed meats such as bacon, bologna, hot dogs
<b>Milk, yogurt and cheese</b> (2 or more servings/day; 3–4 for pregnant or breast-feeding women)	Fat-free or low-fat (1%) dairy products such as fat-free milk, cheeses with no more than 3 grams of fat per ounce	2% low-fat milk, yogurt, part-skim ricotta, imitation hard cheeses, “lite” cream cheese, sour cream	Whole milk, cream, custard-style yogurt, hard cheeses (like Swiss, American, cheddar), cream cheese, sour cream
<b>Fats and oils</b> (approximately 5–8 teaspoons/day)	Corn, olive, canola, sesame, soybean, peanut and sunflower oils, margarine made with unsaturated liquid vegetable oil	Salad dressing and mayonnaise that are not non- or low-fat	Saturated fat, butter, lard, bacon fat, coconut, palm and palm kernel oils
<b>Breads, cereals, pasta, rice, dried peas and beans</b> (6–11 servings/day)	Whole-grain breads, crackers and cereals, pasta, rice, dried peas and beans, plain baked potato	Store-bought pancakes, waffles, biscuits, muffins, cornbread, granola-type cereals, oat bran cereals made with coconut oil	Croissants, pastries, crackers made with saturated oils, egg noodles
<b>Fruits and vegetables</b> (3–5 servings/day)	Fresh, frozen, or dried fruits, canned fruits, raw vegetables	Canned fruit in heavy syrup	Coconut, vegetables prepared in butter, cream or sauce
<b>Snacks</b> (in very limited amounts)	Sorbet, low-fat frozen yogurt, angel food cake, fig bars, plain popcorn, pretzels, fruit juices, tea, coffee, gelatin deserts, graham crackers	Ice milk, fruit crisps and cobblers, homemade cakes, cookies and pies prepared with unsaturated oils	Ice cream, chocolate, potato chips, buttered popcorn, most store bought pies and cakes