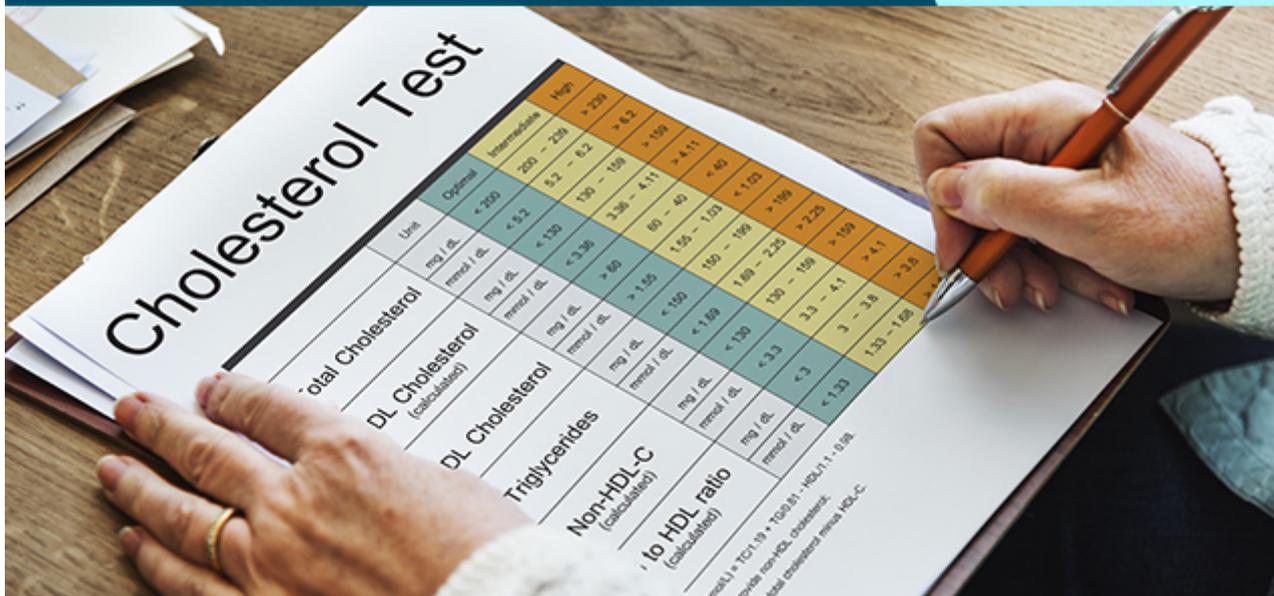


Know Your Numbers: Cholesterol: LDL, HDL And Triglycerides



Know Your Numbers



Keeping a tab on cholesterol levels is also important if you are in your late 30s or early 40s. More so, if you have any risk factors for heart disease such as being overweight or obese or have a family history of heart disease. So to help you know the exact numbers of cholesterol, we will be discussing the types of cholesterol, what is normal and why you have to keep the levels of triglycerides normal.

Do remember to BOOKMARK this page if anyone in your family has heart disease or is at risk of cholesterol-related health problems.

What is cholesterol?

In simple terms, cholesterol is a lipid/fat which is produced by the liver. Although it is required in minimal quantities for the proper functioning of the body, excess cholesterol can land you in trouble. High cholesterol levels can lead to heart attack and stroke.

What is a cholesterol test?

A cholesterol test is used to measure the amount of cholesterol such as low-density lipoproteins (LDL), high-density lipoproteins (HDL) and triglycerides.

Based on the levels obtained, your doctor will decide if you need to go medicines to lower cholesterol or lifestyle modifications are sufficient to manage cholesterol.

Why is it needed?

This test helps you to assess the risk of coronary heart disease (CHD) and prevent (if possible) or lower the risk of cardiovascular complications such as heart attack or stroke.

What are *normal cholesterol levels?

LDL cholesterol

Less than 100 mg/dl: Optimal

100 mg/dl – 129 mg/dl: Above optimal

130 mg/dl – 159 mg/dl: Borderline high

160 mg/dl – 189 mg/dl: High

190 mg/dl or more: Very high

HDL cholesterol

Less than 40 mg/dl in men: Low

Less than 50 mg/dl in women: Low

60 mg/dl and more: High (both men and women)

Triglycerides

Less than 150 mg/dl: Normal

150 mg/dl – 199 mg/dl: Borderline high

200 mg/dl – 499 mg/dl: High

500 mg/dl and more: Very high

What is total cholesterol?

Your total cholesterol is HDL + LDL + VLDL (one-fifth of your triglyceride level). The lower your cholesterol, the better it is for your heart.

200 mg/dl or less (adults): Optimal/Normal

170 mg/dl or less (children): Optimal/Normal

200 – 240 mg/dl (adults): Borderline High

170 – 200 mg/dl (children): Borderline high

240mg/dl and more (adults): High

200 mg/dl and more: High

What should be the cholesterol targets for heart patients?

If you have undergone angioplasty or bypass surgery, are diagnosed with coronary artery disease or suffered a heart attack, LDL levels should be maintained at **less than 70 mg/dl**.

For people with heart disease, HDL levels should be maintained at **60 mg/dl or more** (if possible) and triglycerides should be **less than 150 mg/dl**.

How often should cholesterol levels be tested?

If you are 20 or older and have no family history of coronary heart disease then it is advised to check your cholesterol levels **every four to six years**.

If you have borderline cholesterol, your doctor might advise getting it tested after **one or three months** of lifestyle modifications.

If you have high cholesterol level or hypercholesterolemia and are on medicines, then it is advised to get tested **after three months** to know if the medicines are working or not.

If you are already diagnosed with high cholesterol levels or have coronary heart disease, then getting it tested **every six months** is recommended.

If you are a healthy individual and are above 50 years, then a **yearly assessment** of cholesterol levels is a good idea.

If you have a family history of coronary artery disease or have any other risk factors such as diabetes and hypertension, then it is advised to get tested **every year**.

Cholesterol testing: What you need to know

You should fast at least for 12 hours prior to the test.

You should not drink any alcohol for 48 hours before getting tested.

You should also get tested for other risk factors for coronary heart disease such as diabetes and blood pressure.

*(With inputs from **Dr. Santosh Kumar Dora, Senior Cardiologist, Asian Heart Institute, Mumbai**)*

*Readings are taken from American Heart Association.