

Know Your NUMBERS

Screening and Diagnosis



All adults over the age of 20 should be screened for their blood lipid levels every 5 years. More frequent screenings may be required for those who have heart-health issues, newly diagnosed conditions (such as diabetes), or any recent changes in weight or health.

A very simple blood test, called a fasting lipoprotein profile, can be used to see if your lipids are at healthy levels. The profile tells your healthcare provider four things:

- Your total cholesterol level
- Your LDL cholesterol level
- Your HDL cholesterol level
- Your triglycerides level

The first thing your healthcare provider looks at is your total cholesterol. He or she will consider your family history, your medical history, and other factors to decide on the next steps.

All four numbers are important measures that affect your heart's health. If your LDL and triglyceride levels are too high, your provider will mainly treat the LDL. Treating the LDL often brings the triglyceride levels down, as well — but not always. Some people have normal LDL, but high triglycerides.

The table on this page shows healthy levels for each type of blood lipid.

Type of Lipid	Ideal Level
Total cholesterol	Less than 200 mg/dL
LDL cholesterol	Less than 100 mg/dL
HDL cholesterol	40 mg/dL or higher for men 50 mg/dL or higher for women 60 mg/dL or higher is considered protective against heart disease for both men and women
Triglyceride levels	Less than 150 mg/dL

For heart or risk related information, call the American Heart Association at 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit us online at americanheart.org. For stroke information, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653), or visit strokeassociation.org. For information on life after stroke, call and ask for the Stroke Family Support Network.

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