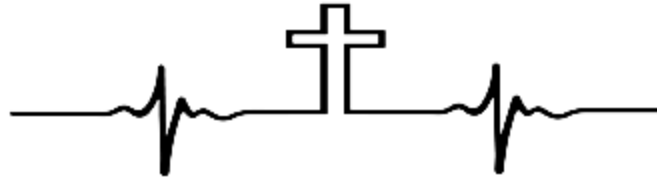




## HEALTH & WELLNESS MINISTRY UPDATES



### Understanding your cholesterol levels

Maintaining healthy cholesterol levels is a great way to keep your heart healthy. It can lower your chances of getting heart disease or having a stroke.

But first, you have to know your cholesterol numbers.

#### **The American Heart Association recommends...**

All adults age 20 or older should have their cholesterol (and other traditional risk factors) checked every four to six years. If certain factors put you at high risk, or if you already have heart disease, your doctor may ask you to check it more often. Work with your doctor to determine your risk for cardiovascular disease and stroke and create a plan to reduce your risk.

Your test results will show your cholesterol levels in milligrams per deciliter of blood (mg/dL). Your total cholesterol and HDL (good) cholesterol are among numerous factors your doctor can use to predict your lifetime or 10-year risk for a heart attack or stroke. Your doctor will also consider other risk factors, such as age, family history, smoking status, diabetes and high blood pressure.

Lipid profile or lipid panel is a blood test that will give you results for your HDL (good) cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol, triglycerides and total blood (or serum) cholesterol.

#### **HDL (good) cholesterol**

HDL cholesterol is called “good” cholesterol. A healthy HDL-cholesterol level may protect against heart attack and stroke. Your doctor will evaluate your HDL and other cholesterol levels and other factors to assess your risk for heart attack or stroke.

People with high blood triglycerides usually also have lower levels of HDL. Genetic factors, Type 2 diabetes, smoking, being overweight and being sedentary can all lower HDL cholesterol. Women tend to have higher levels of HDL cholesterol than men do, but this can change after menopause.



## **LDL (bad) cholesterol**

Since LDL is the bad kind of cholesterol, a low LDL level is considered good for your heart health.

LDL levels are one factor among many to consider when evaluating cardiovascular risk. Talk to your doctor about your LDL cholesterol level as well as other factors that impact your cardiovascular health.

A diet high in saturated and trans fat is unhealthy because it tends to raise LDL cholesterol levels.

## **Triglycerides**

Triglycerides are the most common type of fat in your body. They come from food, and your body also makes them.

Normal triglyceride levels vary by age and sex. People with high triglycerides often have a high total cholesterol level, including a high LDL (bad) cholesterol level and a low HDL (good) cholesterol level. Many people with metabolic syndrome or diabetes also have high triglyceride levels.

### **Factors that can contribute to elevated triglyceride levels:**

- Overweight or obesity
- Insulin resistance or metabolic syndrome
- Diabetes mellitus, especially with poor glucose control
- Alcohol consumption, especially in excess
- Excess sugar intake, especially from processed foods
- High saturated fat intake
- Hypothyroidism
- Chronic kidney disease
- Physical inactivity
- Pregnancy (especially in the third trimester)
- Inflammatory diseases (such as rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus)
- Some medications may also increase triglycerides.

## **Total blood (or serum) cholesterol**

This part of your test results is a composite of different measurements. Your total blood cholesterol is calculated by adding your HDL and LDL cholesterol levels, plus 20% of your triglyceride level.

“Normal ranges” are less important than your overall cardiovascular risk. Like HDL and LDL cholesterol levels, your total blood cholesterol level should be considered in context with your other known risk factors.

Your doctor can recommend treatment approaches accordingly.

*<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/cholesterol/about-cholesterol/what-your-cholesterol-levels-mean>*