

## KNOW YOUR CHOLESTEROL LEVEL 1

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Many people do believe that cholesterol is not good for the body. The truth, however, is that cholesterol is one of the most abundant sterol in the body. It serves as building blocks for many hormones such as progesterone, testosterone to name a few. It is also important for proper functioning of cell membranes. In excess amounts it can clog blood vessels thereby causing damage to vital organs like the heart (heart attack) and the brain (stroke). It can be measured in the blood as a component of lipids (simply called fat). It is carried around in the blood by special proteins called lipoproteins (proteins transporting lipids). The measurement of cholesterol should start by twenty years of age, except the person has other reasons to justify measurement at an earlier age. Types of Cholesterol

**Low Density Lipoprotein (LDL):** Popularly known as “bad” cholesterol deposits cholesterol in the walls of blood vessels (arteries). These deposits cause thickening and narrowing of the arteries, which is known as atherosclerosis.

**High density lipoprotein (HDL):** This is also called the “good” cholesterol and it carries cholesterol away from the artery to the liver.

**Total cholesterol** is a measure of all the cholesterol you have – LDL, HDL and VLDL (very low density lipoprotein).

The ratio of LDL to HDL (LDL/HDL) is also reported along with cholesterol testing as a risk for heart disease. The ratio will be affected by having high level of LDL or very low level of HDL.

### Know your numbers

Lipid profile which is a combination of cholesterol and triglyceride levels is best done after 9 to 12 hours without food; hence a fasting blood sample is the best. We will discuss triglycerides in our next article.

### LDL level   Population of people   Comments

less than 130mg/dl   General population, without risk factor for heart disease

Less than 100mg/dl   People with risk factor for heart disease

Less than 70mg/dl   People with very high risk of heart disease, previous heart attack

130-159mg/dl   Borderline high

160-189mg/dl   High

190mg and above   Critically high

You will notice that the level of LDL permitted for people with risk of heart disease is much lower than what is allowed for general healthy population. So in comparing your results with people it is very important to take into account whether or not you have risk factors for heart disease.

HDL is good cholesterol, the higher the level the better.

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### HDL level Comment

Above 40mg/dl (men)

Above 50 mg /dl (women) good

Below 40mg/dl (men)

below 50 mg/dl women Bad

Total cholesterol is all the components added together with VLDL

### Total cholesterol Comment

Below 200mg/dl Desired for healthy population

200- 239 mg/dl High, not good, especially if HDL is low

Above 240mg/dl Too high

### Conditions that affect interpretation of Cholesterol results

Some of the risk factors for heart disease that modifies the way doctors interpret your cholesterol report include: Smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure, family history of heart disease at an early age and peripheral vascular disease.

### Take Home message

Simple changes to your life style have great impact on your cholesterol. Daily exercise, eating food low in cholesterol, excluding red meat and egg yolk from your diet. Deliberately read the cholesterol content of what you buy. Eat less saturated fat. Check your cholesterol level. Do not miss the next article on the conclusion of this topic.

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