

Understanding Cholesterol Levels

Transcript

When you first learned about your high cholesterol, your healthcare provider probably discussed several numbers with you. That's because your blood cholesterol is actually made up of several parts: your total cholesterol, your low density lipoproteins, or LDL; your high density lipoproteins, or HDL; and your triglycerides.

LDL is the cholesterol that clings to the walls of our blood vessels and forms plaque. This is the bad cholesterol.

HDL does not cling to blood vessel walls. In fact, it may even help remove some of the bad cholesterol. HDL is the good cholesterol.

Triglycerides are another type of fat found in the blood. These, too, can build up on artery walls.

High cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease, and specific cholesterol goals may depend on the presence of other heart disease risk factors like high blood pressure, smoking, being overweight, or a family history of heart disease or diabetes

In most cases, adults should aim for a total cholesterol level below 200.

When it comes to your LDL, lower numbers are the best numbers and the more risk factors you have, the lower your LDL goal is going to be.

If you have no risk factors for heart disease, or just one risk factor, an LDL level of 160 or below is a good goal.

If you have two or more risk factors, you should aim for below 130.

If you have heart disease, diabetes, or a very high risk of suffering a heart attack within the next ten years, your LDL level should be between 70 and 100, or maybe even lower.

When it comes to your HDL, the higher the better. At the very least, everyone should aim for an HDL level above 40, but a level above 60 is even better because it can greatly reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

A good goal for your triglyceride level is below 150.

Getting your cholesterol levels to where you want them involves more than just looking at the specific numbers. Many factors affect them, including: age, sex, family history, other health factors, and lifestyle. All of these things are looked at when determining the best treatment plan for you.

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