

Aim to keep your total cholesterol **UNDER 200**

Your body makes all the cholesterol you need to keep you healthy. When you eat foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol, your body can make too much cholesterol. Over time, this extra cholesterol can clog your arteries. You are then at risk for having a heart attack or stroke.

All adults age 20 or older need to have their blood cholesterol checked at least once every 5 years. People with high numbers need to be tested as advised by a doctor. People with diabetes should have their cholesterol checked every 1-2 years.



Health New England *How Can We Help?*SM

The material contained in this brochure is for general information only and is not intended to provide specific medical advice or recommendations for any individual. Your physician or other health care professional must be consulted for advice with regard to your individual situation.

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FAST FACTS ABOUT CHOLESTEROL

- A Lipid Profile or Panel measures the levels of four different types of cholesterol in your blood (LDL, HDL, triglyceride, and total cholesterol).
- LDL cholesterol transports fat to organs and tissues.
- HDL cholesterol carries fat from tissues and organs back to the liver for reuse or elimination.
- Your liver makes 80 percent of the cholesterol in your body.
- Your body needs cholesterol to make cells and hormones.
- Elevated triglyceride levels are common in people with diabetes.
- Calories eaten and not immediately used by the body become triglycerides.
- Elevated triglyceride levels can make LDL test results appear falsely normal.

WHAT MAKES YOUR CHOLESTEROL HIGH OR LOW?

Your blood cholesterol level is affected by what you eat and also by how quickly your body makes LDL (“bad”) cholesterol and disposes of it. There are many factors that help determine whether your LDL (“bad”) cholesterol level is high or low. The factors listed below are the most important.

YOUR HEREDITY	Your genes influence how high your LDL (“bad”) cholesterol is by affecting how fast LDL is made and removed from the blood.
WHAT YOU EAT	Saturated fat, found mostly in foods that come from animals, and cholesterol, which comes only from animal products are two main nutrients that raise your LDL (“bad”) cholesterol. Eating too much saturated fat can not only raise your LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, it can put you at a greater risk for heart attack. By reducing the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol you eat, you may be able to reduce your blood cholesterol levels.
YOUR WEIGHT	Excess weight tends to increase your LDL (“bad”) cholesterol level. If you are overweight and have a high LDL- cholesterol level, losing weight may help you lower it. Weight loss also helps to lower triglycerides and raise HDL (“good”) cholesterol levels.
HOW MUCH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY YOU GET	Regular physical activity may lower LDL (“bad”) cholesterol and raise HDL (“good”) cholesterol levels.
YOUR AGE AND SEX	Before menopause, women usually have lower total cholesterol levels than men. As women and men age, their blood cholesterol levels rise until about 60 to 65. After 50, women often have higher total cholesterol levels than men of the same age.
HOW MUCH ALCOHOL YOU CONSUME	Drinking too much alcohol can damage the liver and heart muscle, lead to high blood pressure and raise triglycerides.
YOUR STRESS LEVEL	Long-term stress has been shown to raise blood cholesterol levels. Consider ways to reduce the amount of stress in your life.

MEDICATION:

Only you and your doctor can determine if medication can help lower your blood cholesterol levels.

Your Cholesterol Goals

Goal for LDL
 (“bad”) cholesterol is
<100 mg/dl

Goal for triglyceride level
 is
<150 mg/dl

Goal for HDL
 (“good”) cholesterol is
>40 mg/dl