

Total cholesterol



A total cholesterol test is a snapshot of all the cholesterol and triglycerides in your blood. It is used as a screening tool to help you and your doctor decide whether you need further testing.

Cholesterol is a type of fat found in the body. Your body needs a certain amount of cholesterol to function properly. About 20% of cholesterol comes from the foods you eat. Your body makes the other 80%. Things such as age and family health history affect how much cholesterol your body makes.

There are three major kinds of cholesterol: high density lipoprotein (HDL), sometimes referred to as “good” cholesterol; low density lipoprotein (LDL), sometimes referred to as “bad” cholesterol; and very low density lipoprotein (VLDL). A test for “total cholesterol” measures the sum of all of the types of cholesterol.

Too much cholesterol in the blood, or “high cholesterol,” can be serious—cholesterol can build up in the arteries, restricting blood flow to the heart. People with high cholesterol are at risk of getting heart disease, which can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

My total cholesterol is: _____ Date: _____

Compare your results to the recommendations from the National Institutes of Health:

Classifications of total cholesterol		Recommendation
Acceptable	less than 200 mg/dL	Have test repeated every five years
Borderline high	200-239 mg/dL	If you have two other heart disease risk factors*, you should have your physician do a complete lipid profile and get medical advice based on that test. If you have no other risk factors, you should change to a low-fat diet and have another screening within a year.
High	240 mg/dL and above	You should see a physician within two months of screening for medical advice and treatment.

* **Heart disease risk factors** that can be changed include high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, cigarette smoking, obesity, and sedentary lifestyle. Those risk factors that cannot be changed include family history, gender and advancing age (men over age 45 and women over age 55). Diabetes is a risk factor that, in some cases, can be changed or controlled.

My follow-up plan: _____

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Cholesterol quiz



Take this short quiz to see how much you know about cholesterol. True or false?

1. If my "total cholesterol" is over 240, I should see my doctor.
True False
2. HDL is the bad cholesterol.
True False
3. LDL is the bad cholesterol.
True False
4. If I eat a low-fat diet and maintain a healthy weight, I don't need to worry about my cholesterol numbers.
True False
5. Eating more high-fiber and low-fat foods can help to lower cholesterol.
True False
6. No one in my family has high cholesterol, so I don't have to worry!
True False

Answers

1. **True.** If you have a total of over 240, you should see your doctor and have a full lipid profile done to determine what your LDL and HDL are.
2. **False.** HDL is the good cholesterol; your ideal level should be 40 or higher.
3. **True.** LDL is the bad cholesterol; ideally your level should be 130 or lower.
4. **False.** Even with a well-balanced diet and a healthy weight, you still need to have your cholesterol checked regularly by your doctor. Some people make too much of their own cholesterol.
5. **True.** Eating a high-fiber and low-fat diet can lower your cholesterol or help to keep your cholesterol lower.
6. **False.** Even if high cholesterol does not run in your family, you may have high cholesterol. The only way to find out is to see your doctor and have the lipid profile test.

For additional information you can go to the Healthwise® Knowledgebase and search on cholesterol. Go to fchp.org. Under "Members," click on "search Healthwise Knowledgebase." Once on the Healthwise Knowledgebase page, type "cholesterol" in the search box.