

All About Cholesterol

Managing your cholesterol and other blood lipids (also called blood fats) can help you prevent other problems. If your blood lipids are off target, your risk for heart disease, heart attack, and stroke goes up. Managing blood lipids includes both lifestyle changes (such as choosing foods wisely) and, sometimes, taking medicine. **You can take steps to manage your blood lipids.**

What are the different kinds of blood lipids and what do they do?

There are several kinds of lipids in your blood.

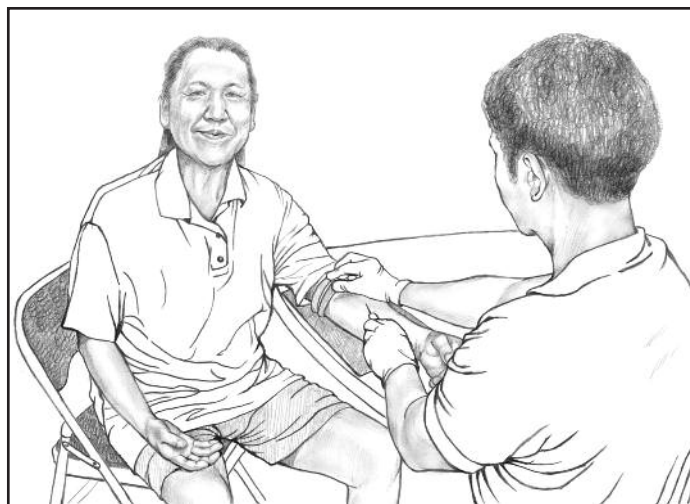
- **LDL cholesterol** is sometimes called bad cholesterol. It can narrow or block your blood vessels. Blocked vessels can lead to a heart attack or a stroke. **Reaching your LDL target is the best way to protect your heart and blood vessels.**
- **HDL cholesterol** is sometimes called good cholesterol. It helps remove deposits from the insides of your blood vessels and keeps your blood vessels from getting blocked.
- **Triglycerides** are another kind of lipid. High triglycerides raise your risk of a heart attack or stroke.

How does diabetes affect my blood lipids?

Many people with diabetes also have low HDL cholesterol and high triglycerides. But if you take steps to keep these numbers within the target range, you'll lower your risk for heart attack and stroke.

How will I know if my blood lipid levels are off target?

A blood test can tell you whether your lipid levels are off target. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommends that you have your levels checked at least once a year if you have diabetes or if your lipid numbers are off-target. Have your blood tested at least every 5 years if you don't have diabetes and your numbers are on target.



Have your blood lipids checked at least once a year to help prevent heart disease, a heart attack, or a stroke.

What are the recommended targets for blood lipids?

See the chart below for targets suggested by the ADA. Write the results of your latest blood lipid check here.

Blood Lipid	My Results	ADA Targets (mg/dl)
LDL cholesterol		below 100*
HDL cholesterol		above 40 (for men)
		above 50 (for women)
Triglycerides		below 150

*If you already have heart and blood vessel disease, your target is below 70.

What treatments are recommended?

Both lifestyle changes and medicines help control blood lipids. Treatment differs from one person to the next. Some people can reach their blood lipid targets with lifestyle changes like healthy eating and physical activity. Other people need lifestyle changes plus medicines. Work with your health care provider to find a treatment that's right for you.

What can you do to improve your numbers?

Here are some steps you can take to improve your cholesterol. Place a check mark next to steps you're willing to try. You can learn more about how to make these changes in other toolkit titles. Ask your health care provider for more information.

- If you smoke, quit.
- Lose weight if needed.
- Exercise most days of the week. Brisk walking for 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week is a good goal.
- Switch to a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet.
- Your doctor may also prescribe cholesterol-lowering medicine.

Medicines

Not everyone takes the same blood lipid medicine and many people take more than one kind. The ones you take will depend on your blood lipid levels and other factors.

- **Statins.** These medicines lower LDL cholesterol, boost HDL levels, and lower triglyceride levels. Studies have shown that they are the best type of medicine for lowering LDL cholesterol. But if you're pregnant, you should not take statins.
- **Fibric acid derivatives, also called fibrates.** These medicines lower triglycerides and raise HDL levels. They may either lower or raise LDL cholesterol, or not affect it at all.

- **Nicotinic acid, also called niacin.** These medicines lower triglycerides raise HDL levels, and lower LDL cholesterol.
- **Cholesterol absorption inhibitors.** These medicines lower LDL cholesterol and triglycerides and raise HDL levels.
- **Bile acid sequestrants.** These medicines lower LDL cholesterol and can raise HDL levels. They either have no effect on triglycerides or, in some cases, they can raise triglyceride levels.

Cholesterol is also affected by blood pressure and blood glucose (sugar). If your blood glucose and blood pressure are high, it's likely that your cholesterol numbers may be off as well. All of these are risk factors for diabetes and heart disease, and the more risk factors you have, the greater your risk. Talk to your doctor about whether you may be at higher risk for diabetes and heart disease.

More resources from the American Diabetes Association

- Visit www.diabetes.org/cholesterol to learn more.
- For recipes and information about meal planning, see My FoodAdvisor™, an online tool, at www.diabetes.org/MyFoodAdvisor.
- Know your risk for type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Try ADA's online health risk calculator, My Health Advisor, at www.CheckUpAmerica.org/MHA.
- Ask your health care provider for more Toolkit titles on changing habits, physical activity, losing weight, and healthy eating.

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PCNA Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association