

CHOLESTEROL INFORMATION

Cholesterol is a soft, fat-like, waxy substance found in the bloodstream and in all the body's cells. The body needs only a small amount of cholesterol.

TOTAL CHOLESTEROL LEVELS	
< 199 mg/dl	Desirable level corresponding to lower risk for heart disease
200-239 mg/dl	Borderline high risk
≥ 240 or above	High risk

Cholesterol comes from two sources: the body and food. The liver and other cells in the body make about 75 percent of blood cholesterol. The other 25 percent comes from the foods that we eat.



When too much LDL cholesterol circulates in the blood, it can form plaques, which are thick, hard deposits that can narrow the arteries and make them less flexible. If a clot forms and blocks a narrowed artery, a heart attack or stroke can result.

About one-quarter to one-third of blood cholesterol is carried by HDL. This cholesterol seems to protect against heart attack. Low HDL cholesterol (less than 40 mg/dL for men and less than 50 mg/dL for women) is a risk factor for coronary artery disease. HDL removes the excess cholesterol from arterial plaques and carries it back to the liver, where it is passed from the body.

Cholesterol is transported from the cells by carriers called lipoproteins. Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol is called "bad" cholesterol. High-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol is known as "good" cholesterol. These two types of cholesterol make up the total cholesterol level.

TRIGLYCERIDE LEVELS	
< 150 mg/dl	Normal
150-199 mg/dl	Borderline high risk
≥ 200 mg/dl	High

Triglyceride is a form of fat made in the body. Elevated triglycerides can be due to many causes, including a diet high in carbohydrates (60 percent of total calories or more). People with high triglycerides often have a high total cholesterol level, including a high LDL and a low HDL.

Additional information can be found at: www.americanheart.org