What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that is naturally present in the human body. It has many essential functions when it comes to our ability to digest fatty foods and make hormones. Alternately, cholesterol can also be consumed by eating animal-based foods.

Lipid disorders, such as high cholesterol, may lead to life-threatening illnesses, such as coronary artery disease, heart attack and stroke. Studies show that achieving healthy levels of lipids can help prevent heart attacks and reduce deaths from heart disease.

One of the most important ways patients with high cholesterol can manage their health is by taking medication as directed. Most people who take medicines for high cholesterol do not experience any side effects. Although you may not feel differently when taking your medication, you should still take it as directed. An individual with high cholesterol levels often has no signs or symptoms, which is why regular blood tests are very important.
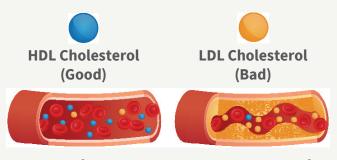
Walgreens

What is a lipid panel test?

A lipid panel is a blood test that measures the lipid levels of several types of cholesterol, fats and fat-like substances in the blood. You may be able to obtain this test to screen for unhealthy cholesterol levels. It can help predict the risk of developing heart disease. Be sure to ask your health care provider if lipid panel testing is appropriate for you.

What does a lipid panel test for?

A complete lipid panel test typically tests for:

Total cholesterol which measures all cholesterol in your blood. High levels of total cholesterol increase the risk of heart disease.

HDL Cholesterol (Good)

LDL Cholesterol (Bad)

Normal Artery

Artery Narrowed

LDL cholesterol which is the so-called "bad" cholesterol. This part of the lipid panel test measures the cholesterol in LDL particles. It is called "bad" cholesterol because it deposits excess cholesterol in the walls of blood vessels (called plaques). This reduces blood flow and can harden and narrow the arteries, which can contribute to heart disease and stroke. High levels of LDL cholesterol raise your risk for heart disease and stroke.

HDL cholesterol which is the so-called "good" cholesterol. This part of the lipid panel measures the cholesterol in HDL particles. It is called "good" cholesterol because HDL helps get rid of LDL cholesterol, which helps to keep the arteries open and allow blood to flow. High levels of HDL cholesterol can lower your risk of heart disease and stroke.

Triglycerides which are a type of fat in the blood. After you eat, your body converts extra calories into triglycerides and stores them in fat cells. Elevated triglycerides, along with elevated cholesterol, can increase your risk for heart disease and stroke.[2]

What do my results mean?

The following are general guidelines for desirable cholesterol levels:

Cholesterol level guidelines[2]	
LDL cholesterol	Less than 100 mg/dL
HDL cholesterol	60 mg/dL or higher
Triglycerides	Less than 150 mg/dL

Your health care provider will tell you what your results mean. They may give you specific cholesterol targets based on your age, family history, lifestyle and other factors. If your cholesterol levels are not in the desired target levels, lifestyle changes or cholesterol-lowering medications can reduce your risk of heart problems. Together, you and your health care provider can decide the best treatment plan for you.

What are the symptoms of high triglycerides?

There are often no symptoms of high triglyceride levels. Very high levels of triglycerides can cause severe pain in the stomach area due to inflammation of the pancreas. Your health care provider will usually check for high triglycerides in your blood as part of a lipid panel. Levels above 150mg/dl may raise your risk for heart disease. A triglyceride level of 150 mg/dL or higher is also a risk factor for metabolic syndrome-which is a cluster of conditions that increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.[9] The guidelines for triglyceride levels are:

Category[7]	Triglyceride level[7]
Borderline high	150 to 199 mg/dL
High	200 to 499 mg/dL
Very high	500 mg/dL and above

You can find more information around cholesterol management and heart health by scanning the following QR code:

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