

Make the Link! Patient Page

Cholesterol, Triglycerides, and Diabetes

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a type of fat in your blood. There are different types:

► LDL cholesterol:

LDL cholesterol is sometimes called “bad” cholesterol. It can narrow or block your blood vessels. Narrowed vessels can raise your risk of a heart attack or stroke. Keeping your LDL cholesterol low protects your heart.

► HDL cholesterol:

HDL cholesterol is sometimes called “good” cholesterol. It helps remove deposits from the inside of your blood vessels and stops the blood vessels from getting blocked. Keeping your HDL cholesterol high protects your heart.

What are triglycerides?

Triglycerides are another type of fat in your blood. High triglycerides raise your risk of a heart attack or stroke. Keeping your triglycerides low protects your heart.

Why should people with diabetes be concerned about cholesterol?

Diabetes raises your risk of heart attack and stroke. Cholesterol problems are common in people with diabetes and raise your risk for heart attack and stroke even more.

What are cholesterol and triglyceride targets for people with diabetes?

For most people with diabetes, target levels are:

- LDL cholesterol: <100 mg/dl
- HDL cholesterol: >45 mg/dl for men and >55 mg/dl for women
- Triglycerides: <150 mg/dl

If my cholesterol and triglyceride levels are off-target, what can I do?

If your numbers are not on target, you can take these steps:

- Work with a dietitian to develop your own meal plan.
- Use less oil, butter, margarine, and other fats when cooking.
- Choose low-fat dairy products.
- Eat small servings of meat, fish, and poultry.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Choose whole-grain bread and cereal.
- Try to exercise for 30 minutes most days.
- Follow your health care provider’s instructions for taking medicine.
- If you smoke, get help to quit.

Several medicines can help you reach your target cholesterol goals. Talk with your health care provider about the best medicine for you. You may need more than one medicine to reach your target numbers.

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Cholesterol At-a-Glance

- ▶ Cholesterol problems are common in people with diabetes.
- ▶ High LDL (bad) cholesterol, high triglycerides, and low HDL (good) cholesterol levels can raise your risk for heart attack and stroke.
- ▶ If your cholesterol numbers are off target, talk with your health care provider about what you can do. Meal planning, exercise, and medicines can help you reach your target goals.

I'm not sure I can handle all this...

It's hard enough to deal with diabetes every day. Worrying about cholesterol and triglycerides may make you feel overwhelmed. If this happens, talk to someone. You could call a friend or family member, or talk with someone on your health care team. Support groups can help, too. To find a support group in your area, or for more information about cholesterol and diabetes, call the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-342-2383.

How will I know if my cholesterol levels are OK?

Have your health care provider check your cholesterol levels at least once a year.

My Health Care Professional

My Cholesterol and Triglyceride Levels

Long-term goal for my LDL cholesterol: _____
 Long-term goal for my HDL cholesterol: _____
 Long-term goal for my triglycerides: _____

Date							
LDL cholesterol							
HDL cholesterol							
Triglycerides							

My Action Plan:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____