

Cholesterol test

A complete cholesterol test — also called a lipid panel or lipid profile — is a blood test that can measure the amount of cholesterol and triglycerides in your blood.

A cholesterol test can help determine your risk of the buildup of plaques in your arteries that can lead to narrowed or blocked arteries throughout your body (atherosclerosis).

High cholesterol levels usually don't cause any signs or symptoms, so a cholesterol test is an important tool. High cholesterol levels often are a significant risk factor for heart disease.

High cholesterol by itself usually has no signs or symptoms. A complete cholesterol test is done to determine whether your cholesterol is high and estimate your risk of developing heart disease.

A complete cholesterol test, referred to as a lipid panel or lipid profile, includes the calculation of four types of fats (lipids) in your blood:

- **Total cholesterol. This is a sum of your blood's cholesterol content.**
- **High-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol. This is sometimes called the "good" cholesterol because it helps carry away LDL cholesterol, thus keeping arteries open and your blood flowing more freely.**
- **Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol. This is sometimes called the "bad" cholesterol. Too much of it in your blood causes the buildup of fatty deposits (plaques) in your arteries (atherosclerosis), which reduces blood flow. These plaques sometimes rupture and can lead to a heart attack or stroke.**

- **Triglycerides.** Triglycerides are a type of fat in the blood. When you eat, your body converts any calories it doesn't need into triglycerides, which are stored in fat cells. High triglyceride levels are associated with several factors, including being overweight, eating too many sweets or drinking too much alcohol, smoking, being sedentary, or having diabetes with elevated blood sugar levels.

Who should get a cholesterol test?

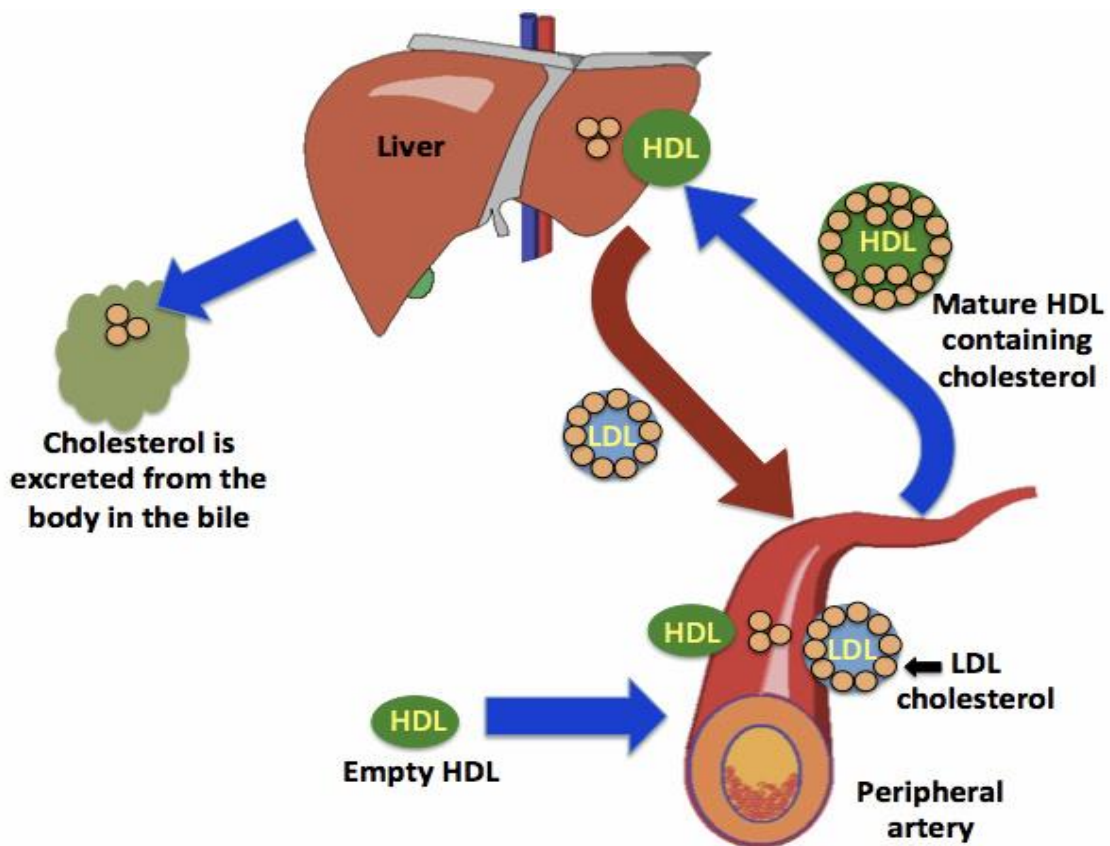
Adults at average risk of developing heart disease should have their cholesterol checked every five years, beginning at age 18.

More frequent testing may be needed if your initial test results were abnormal or if you're at higher risk of heart disease because you:

- **Have a family history of high cholesterol or heart attacks**
- **Are overweight**
- **Are physically inactive**
- **Have diabetes**
- **Eat a high-fat diet**
- **Smoke cigarettes**
- **Are a man older than 45 or a woman older than 55**

People with a history of heart attacks or stroke require regular cholesterol testing to monitor the effectiveness of their treatments.

If your results show that your cholesterol level is high, don't get discouraged. You may be able to lower your cholesterol with lifestyle changes, such as quitting smoking, exercising and eating a healthy diet. If lifestyle changes aren't enough, cholesterol-lowering medications also may help. Talk to your doctor about the best way for you to lower your cholesterol.



LIPID PROFILE

	DESIRABLE	BORDERLINE	HIGH RISK
Cholesterol	<200 mg/dl	200-239 mg/dl	240 mg/dl
Triglycerides	<150 mg/dl	150-199 mg/dl	200-499 mg/dl
HDL cholesterol	60 mg/dl	35-45 mg/dl	<35 mg/dl
LDL cholesterol	60-130 mg/dl	130-159 mg/dl	160-189 mg/dl
Cholesterol/HDL ratio	4.0	5.0	6.0