



Cardiovascular Association, P.L.L.C.

The Healthy Heart for Women



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What Is Your Risk?

If you have any one of the following, you are at increased risk of having a heart attack.

- Smoking
- BP > 140/90
- Total Cholesterol > 200 mg/dl or HDL < 40 mg/dl
- Father or brother had a heart attack before 55 or mother or sister had a heart attack before 65
- Diabetes (fasting blood sugar > 125 mg/dl)
- Age > 55
- Body Mass Index (BMI) > 25 < Total of 30 min. of physical activity on most days
- Doctor told you that you have Angina (chest pains) or have had a heart attack

Steps to Control Cholesterol Levels

A variety of things can affect cholesterol levels.

These are things you can do something about:

- Get your blood cholesterol level checked
- Learn what your numbers mean.
- Follow a low saturated fat and low cholesterol eating plan.
- Become physically active.
- Aim for a healthy weight.
- Take medication, if prescribed.

Saturated fat and cholesterol in the food you eat make your blood cholesterol level go up. Saturated fat is the main culprit, but cholesterol in foods also matters. Reducing the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol in your diet helps lower your blood cholesterol level.

High Blood Cholesterol

Why is Cholesterol Important?

Your blood cholesterol level has a lot to do with your chances of getting heart disease. High blood cholesterol is one of the major risk factors for heart disease. Cholesterol in your arteries is like rust in a pipe. When there is too much cholesterol in the blood, the arteries become clogged, which leads to heart disease.



Being overweight is a risk factor for heart disease. It also tends to increase your cholesterol. Losing weight can help lower your LDL and total cholesterol levels, as well as raise your HDL and lower your triglyceride.

What Do Your Cholesterol Numbers Mean?

Total Cholesterol Level

< 200 mg/dL	Desirable
200-239 mg/dL	Borderline high
> 240 mg/dL	High

LDL Cholesterol Level

< 100mg/dL	Optimal
100-129 mg/dL	Near optimal
130-159 mg/dL	Borderline high
160-189 mg/dL	High
> 190 mg/dL	Very high

HDL Cholesterol Level

< 40 mg/dL	Low
> 60 mg/dL	High

Everyone age 20 and older should have their cholesterol measured at least once every 5 years. This blood test is done after a 9 to 12-hour fast and have information about your:

- ♦ *Total cholesterol*
- ♦ *LDL (bad) cholesterol—the main source of cholesterol buildup and blockage in the arteries*
- ♦ *HDL (good) cholesterol—helps keep cholesterol from building up in the arteries*
- ♦ *Triglycerides—another form of fat in your blood*