



Wellness Watch



September is National Cholesterol Education Month!

Support this campaign by practicing preventive health care and by understanding that early detection is the best line of defense. Because your cholesterol levels are an important measure of heart health, it's recommended that you receive a lipid panel test at least every five years. This test includes total cholesterol, high density lipoprotein (HDL), low density lipoprotein (LDL), and triglyceride levels.

When interpreting your cholesterol numbers, consider these general guidelines.

Total cholesterol	
Below 200 mg/dL	Desirable
200-239 mg/dL	Borderline high
240 mg/dL and above	High
LDL cholesterol	
Below 70 mg/dL	Optimal for people at very high risk of heart disease
Below 100 mg/dL	Optimal for people at risk of heart disease
100-129 mg/dL	Near optimal
130-159 mg/dL	Borderline high
160-189 mg/dL	High
190 mg/dL and above	Very high

HDL cholesterol	
Below 40 mg/dL	Poor
40-59 mg/dL	Better
60 mg/dL and above	Best
Triglycerides	
Below 150 mg/dL	Desirable
150-199 mg/dL	Borderline high
200-499 mg/dL	High
500 or above	Very high

Lifestyle matters!

Try these healthy tips to reduce your cholesterol:

- Losing even 5 to 10 pounds of excess weight can help reduce cholesterol levels.
- As a general rule, get no more than 10% of your daily calories from saturated fats and try to avoid trans fats. Monounsaturated fats found in olive, canola, and peanut oils are a healthier option.
- Limit your cholesterol intake by consuming no more than 300 mg of cholesterol per day-less than 200 mg if you have heart disease.
- Eat heart-healthy foods such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables that are rich in dietary fiber, and fish that is rich in omega-three fatty acids.
- With your doctor's consent, exercise regularly for at least 30 minutes and up to 60 minutes on most days of the week.
- If you are a tobacco user, quit! Quitting smoking can improve your HDL levels. Within one year of being smoke-free, your risk of heart disease is half that of a smoker and after 15 years, your risk of heart disease is similar to someone who never smoked.
- When practicing healthy lifestyle habits isn't enough to lower your cholesterol, your doctor may recommend medication so take it as prescribed.

Most insurance companies provide benefits for preventive tests and exams. Once you verify coverage, contact your doctor to schedule any overdue wellness screenings!