



# Cholesterol and Other Lipid Tests

The National Heart Foundation recommends that all adults over 45 years old have a regular blood cholesterol test every few years.

People younger than 45 who are at higher risk of coronary heart disease, for example, those who have diabetes, a family history of raised cholesterol, heart disease or high blood pressure, should also have a regular cholesterol test.

## How do you know if you have high cholesterol?

You don't - it doesn't produce any symptoms and many people first learn they have high cholesterol when they have a heart attack or a stroke.

## Where does it come from?

Most cholesterol is manufactured in the liver from fats in our diet. The liver makes cholesterol and attaches it to carrier proteins called lipoproteins.

## What are LDL & HDL?

There are two major types of lipoproteins - low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL).

LDL is the major carrier of cholesterol from the liver to the rest of the body. When cholesterol levels are excessive, LDL deposits cholesterol onto the arteries, causing the damage. LDL is sometimes called 'bad cholesterol'.

HDL soaks up cholesterol from the bloodstream and takes it back to the liver. It reduces cholesterol and lessens the chance of it being deposited in the arteries. HDL is sometimes called 'good cholesterol'.

The more HDL you have and the less LDL - that is, the higher the ratio of HDL to LDL - the lower your risk of artery disease.

How much LDL and HDL you have in your blood is influenced by the types of fats you eat as well as genes inherited from your parents.

## How is cholesterol tested?

The test is a simple blood test taken after a period of fasting (not eating) for 8 hours. The test measures the total cholesterol level (LDL plus HDL) and other fats called triglycerides.

## How often should you be tested?

Speak with your doctor about how often you should be tested as it will be influenced by your age, your family history and your general health.



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