



Cholesterol: Understanding & Optimizing Your Levels

A Basic/Standard Lipid Panel shows the following:

Total Cholesterol:

What it is: The total amount of cholesterol in your blood, including LDL, HDL, and other cholesterol-containing particles.

General goal: <200 mg/dL

Total cholesterol alone does not provide the full picture, so it should always be interpreted alongside the other lipid values.

HDL Cholesterol (High-Density Lipoprotein)

Often called: "Good cholesterol"

What it is: HDL helps remove excess cholesterol from the bloodstream and carries it back to the liver for disposal. Higher HDL levels are generally associated with better heart health.

General goal: Ideally ≥ 60 mg/dL for optimal cardiovascular protection

How to improve HDL:

- 🏃 Exercise regularly, especially aerobic and resistance training
- 🚭 Don't smoke or vape
- ⚖️ Maintain a healthy weight
- 🥑 Choose healthy unsaturated fats (olive oil, nuts, seeds, avocado)
- 🐟 Eat omega-3-rich fish regularly
- 🍎 Focus on a whole-food, Mediterranean-style eating pattern
- 😴 Prioritize quality sleep and stress management

LDL Cholesterol (Low-Density Lipoprotein)

Often called: "Bad cholesterol"

What it is: LDL carries cholesterol from the liver to the body's tissues. When LDL levels are too high, cholesterol can build up in artery walls, increasing the risk of plaque formation, heart attack, and stroke.

General goal: <100 mg/dL

(lower for people at higher cardiovascular risk)

How to improve LDL:

- 🌿 Eat more soluble fiber (oats, beans, lentils, apples, berries)
- 🥑 Choose healthy fats like olive oil, avocados, nuts, and seeds
- 🐟 Eat fatty fish (salmon, sardines, trout) 1–2 times per week
- 🏃 Exercise regularly (aim for at least 150 minutes per week)
- ⚖️ Maintain a healthy weight
- 🚭 Avoid smoking
- 🍔 Limit saturated fats and ultra-processed foods

Triglycerides

What they are: Triglycerides are a type of fat used for energy. Elevated levels are associated with insulin resistance, excess sugar and refined carbohydrate intake, obesity, excessive alcohol intake, and metabolic syndrome.

General goal: <150 mg/dL **Optimal:** <100 mg/dL

How to improve triglycerides:

- 🍷 Reduce added sugars and sugary beverages
- 🍞 Limit refined carbohydrates (white bread, pastries, sweets)
- 🍷 Limit or avoid alcohol if triglycerides are elevated
- 🥬 Eat more vegetables, lean protein, and high-fiber foods
- 🐟 Increase omega-3 fats (fatty fish or supplements if recommended)
- 🏃 Exercise consistently
- ⚖️ Lose excess weight if needed (even a 5–10% weight loss can make a significant difference)
- 🩺 Manage blood sugar and insulin resistance

Questions?

Reach out to us anytime for an in-depth appointment to discuss optimizing your cardiovascular health.

913-513-2166