



CIGNA HealthCare

HIGH BLOOD CHOLESTEROL WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

High blood cholesterol is one of the major risk factors for heart disease. In fact, the higher your blood cholesterol level, the greater your risk for developing heart disease or having a heart attack.

How Does Cholesterol Cause Heart Disease?

When there is too much cholesterol (a fat-like substance) in your blood, it builds up in the walls of your arteries. Over time, this buildup causes “hardening of the arteries,” so that arteries become narrowed and blood flow to the heart is slowed down or blocked. If the blood supply to a portion of the heart is completely cut off by a blockage, the result is a heart attack.

What Do Your Cholesterol Numbers Mean?

Everyone ages 20 and older should have his or her cholesterol measured at least once every five years. It is best to have a blood test called a “lipoprotein profile” to find out your cholesterol numbers. This blood test is done after a 9 to 12-hour fast and gives 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

See how your cholesterol numbers compare to the numbers below:

Total Cholesterol Level	Category
Less than 200 mg/dL	Desirable
200-239 mg/dL	Borderline High
240 mg/dL and above	High
LDL Cholesterol Level	LDL Cholesterol Category
Less than 100mg/dL	Optimal
100-129 mg/dL	Near optimal/above optimal
130-159 mg/dL	Borderline High
160-189 mg/dL	High
190 mg/dL and above	Very High
(Over)	

Always discuss with your treating physician the preventive health care most appropriate for your needs and clinical condition. Adapted from National Institutes of Health, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, NIH Publication No. 01-3290.

“CIGNA HealthCare” refers to various operating subsidiaries of “CIGNA” Corporation. Products and services are provided by these subsidiaries and not by CIGNA Corporation. These subsidiaries include CIGNA HealthCare of California, Inc., Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, CIGNA Vision Care, Inc., Tel-Drug, Inc and its affiliates, CIGNA Behavioral Health, Inc., Intracorp, and HMO or service company subsidiaries of CIGNA Health Corporation and CIGNA Dental Health, Inc.



HIGH BLOOD CHOLESTEROL WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

HDL (good) cholesterol protects against heart disease. So for HDL, high numbers are better. A level less than 40 mg/dL is low and is considered a major risk factor because it increases your risk for developing heart disease. HDL levels of 60 mg/dL or more help to lower your risk for heart disease.

Triglycerides can also raise heart disease risk. Levels that are borderline high (150-199 mg/dL) or high (200 mg/dL or more) may need treatment in some people.

What Affects Cholesterol Levels?

Things you can do something about:

Diet. 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.

Weight. Being overweight is a risk factor for heart disease. It also tends to increase your cholesterol.

Physical Activity. Not being physically active is a risk factor for heart disease. Regular physical activity can help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and raise HDL (good) cholesterol levels. You should try to be physically active for 30 minutes on most, if not all days.

Things you cannot do anything about also can affect cholesterol levels. These include:

- **Age and Gender.** As women and men get older, their cholesterol levels rise. Before menopause, women have lower total cholesterol levels than men the same age. After menopause, women's LDL levels tend to rise.
- **Heredity.** Your genes partly determine how much cholesterol your body makes. High blood cholesterol can run in families.

To reduce your risk for heart disease or keep it low, it is very important to control any other risk factors you may have, such as high blood pressure and smoking.