

## Cholesterol Information

At your recent visit your cholesterol (or lipid profile) was checked. Your **total cholesterol** = \_\_\_\_\_

There are three types of cholesterol (and your levels are):

**VLDL** (very low-density lipoprotein) = \_\_\_\_\_

**LDL** (low-density lipoprotein) = \_\_\_\_\_

**HDL** (high-density lipoprotein) = \_\_\_\_\_

**Triglyceride level** = \_\_\_\_\_

**Cholesterol to HDL ratio** = \_\_\_\_\_



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### What are “normal” results?

A desirable fasting total cholesterol is less than 200, “borderline” at 200 - 239, and high at 240 or higher. A desirable HDL is 35 or higher. LDL is desirable at less than 130, “borderline” at 130 - 159 and elevated at 160 or higher. A normal triglyceride level is less than 200. A ratio of total cholesterol to HDL of less than 5 is desirable.

Your liver makes most of your body's cholesterol to help carry fat to parts of your body that need fat for energy and repairs, or fat storage sites. Some cholesterol in your body comes from eating high cholesterol foods. The LDL is called “bad” cholesterol because it easily becomes adherent to blood vessel walls. The HDL is called “good” because it carries the LDL back to the liver. The VLDL carries fat from the liver to other parts of your body. VLDL becomes LDL after it unloads fat.

### How to improve your cholesterol profile

**Diet:** Changing your diet is often the most effective way to lower or maintain your cholesterol at a desirable level, though it may take a few months to begin to see the results. You can do this by eating less fat and cholesterol. Eating soluble fiber lowers your cholesterol level by keeping the cholesterol you eat from being absorbed by your body. Oats, beans, and fruit are rich in insoluble fiber. You can choose monounsaturated fat from vegetable sources (such as olive and canola oil) which will lower the LDL “bad” cholesterol without lowering the HDL “good” cholesterol. Polyunsaturated fat from vegetable sources such as safflower, sunflower or corn oil may lower both the LDL and HDL. Margarine is in this category. You should avoid saturated fat from animal sources such as butter, lard and fatty meats. It is also found in vegetable sources such as coconut, palm, and “partially hydrogenated” oils, which are found in many processed foods. The best way to find the fat content in processed food is to read the labels. Aim for less than 20 - 30 grams of fat each day.

**Oral estrogen:** Use of oral estrogen (when appropriate) will increase HDL “good” cholesterol.

**Weight and Exercise:** If you weigh too much, your body stores more fat and cholesterol than desirable. A regular aerobic exercise program can help raise your HDL “good” cholesterol level, can help you lose weight, and can even help lower other cardiac risk factors.

### Other Cardiac Risk Factors:

High cholesterol is only one of the many risk factors for heart disease. You have no control over such factors as your family's history of elevated cholesterol or heart attacks. You can control other risks. Smoking lowers your HDL “good” cholesterol and increases your risk of heart attack, stroke, and cancer. High blood pressure and diabetes can be controlled through diet, weight loss and medication. Stress reduction is also important.

### A word about triglycerides:

Excess carbohydrate (starch) consumed in the diet that cannot be used immediately for energy is converted into triglyceride and stored in the adipose tissue. A disorder of elevated serum triglycerides is seen secondary to stress, excessive alcohol use and dietary indiscretion. It may be associated with a predisposition to premature coronary artery disease. Weight reduction, when applicable, is the most effective treatment. Medications to lower serum triglycerides are available but may have troublesome side effects. These medications are usually prescribed by an internist.

**Whatever your cholesterol is now, you should have it periodically rechecked. If all your cholesterol levels are desirable and you're not at risk for heart disease, have your cholesterol level checked every five years. Your doctor may ask you to have more frequent cholesterol tests.**

**Please follow-up with your primary care physician. Please call our office if you need a referral for a primary care physician.**



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OBSTETRICS • GYNECOLOGY • INFERTILITY

15151 NATIONAL AVENUE • LOS GATOS, CALIFORNIA 95032

PHONE: (408) 356-0431 • FAX: (408) 356-8569

[www.losolivos-obgyn.com](http://www.losolivos-obgyn.com)

### GUIDELINES TO HELP LOWER BLOOD CHOLESTEROL

1. Decrease total fat in the diet. Use less salad dressing, sauces, margarine, fried foods. Restaurant foods are great sources of “hidden fats”. Try some new fat-free products.
2. Decrease the amount of saturated fat in your diet. Saturated fat comes from animal foods - meats, milk, cheese, eggs, poultry skin. Two vegetable oils - coconut oil and palm kernel oil - are also very saturated. These two culprits are hidden in many processed foods including crackers, whipped toppings and some nondairy creamers. **BECOME A LABEL READER.**
3. Polyunsaturated fats include safflower, sunflower, corn, and soybean oils. These lower blood cholesterol but shouldn't be consumed in excessive amounts as the “good” fats have the same number of calories as the “bad” fats. Excess fat is a risk factor in certain cancers and heart disease.
4. Monounsaturated fats include olive, canola, and peanut oils; avocado, and most nuts. These also lower blood cholesterol but again contribute extra calories to the diet. Avoid cashews and macadamia nuts.
5. Eat fish two or three times a week. Certain fish are high in Omega-3 fatty acids which are thought to help lower blood cholesterol. The fish highest in these fatty acids include salmon, mackerel, sardines, and trout. However, all fish contain some and are beneficial. **DO NOT** take fish liver oil capsules as excess can thin the blood, reduce clotting time, and contribute to the risk of stroke.
6. Certain fibers help to lower blood cholesterol. These include oat bran (oatmeal), apples, carrots, and legumes (dried peas and beans).
7. Learn to love nonfat milk, lowfat, and nonfat dairy products.
8. When you choose a margarine, this is how the label should read.
  1. First ingredient: “Liquid polyunsaturated oil” (safflower, sunflower, corn, soybean).
  2. Second ingredient: “Partially hardened or hydrogenated polyunsaturated oil”.
  3. Ratio of polyunsaturated to saturated fats should be 2 : 1.