

# JANUARY KNOW YOUR #'S

## Ups & Downs of Cholesterol: HDL, LDL, & Total Score



### Heart Health Starts with Healthy Cholesterol

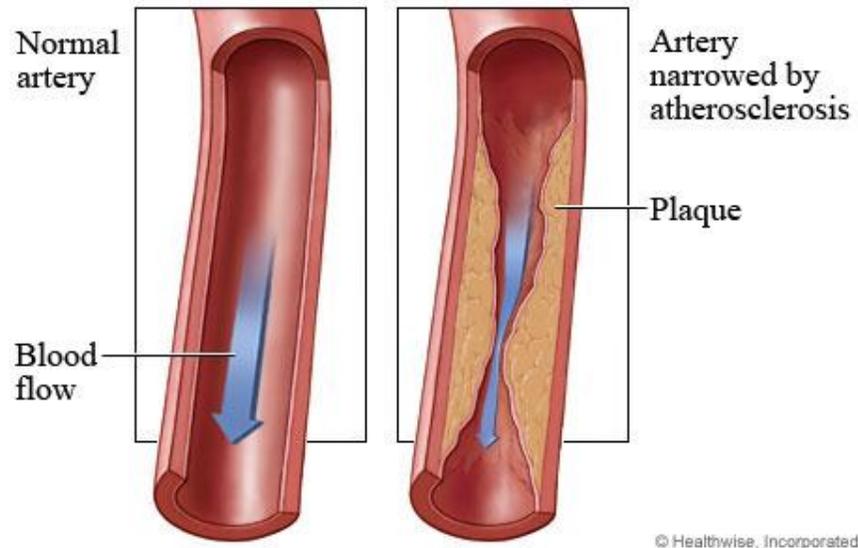
- Your Cholesterol Score should be less than 220
  - Cholesterol Score is made of two primary units: LDL and HDL
  - LDL is "BAD" cholesterol and raises your risk of heart attack or stroke. Your total score should be less than 120.
  - HDL is "GOOD" cholesterol and lowers your risk for heart disease and stroke. Your total score should be greater than 40.

**Know your score?** If not, visit the Consiglio Wellness Center for a cholesterol screening. If yes, [go HERE](#) and find how you rank.

### What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a type of fat (lipid) in your blood. Your cells need [cholesterol](#), and your body makes all it needs. But you also get cholesterol from the food you eat.

If you have too much cholesterol, it starts to build up in your arteries. This is called hardening of the arteries, or [atherosclerosis](#). It is the starting point for some heart problems. The buildup can narrow the arteries and make it harder for blood to flow through them. The buildup can also lead to dangerous blood clots and inflammation that can cause heart attacks and strokes. Here's an image of atherosclerosis:



## Why does cholesterol matter?

Your cholesterol levels can help your doctor find out your risk for having a heart attack or stroke. But it's not just about your cholesterol. Your doctor uses your cholesterol levels plus other things to calculate your risk. These include: blood pressure, risk of diabetes, your age/sex/race and whether or not you smoke.

## What affects cholesterol levels?

Many things can affect cholesterol levels, including:

- **The foods you eat.** Eating too much **saturated fat**, **trans fat**, and cholesterol can raise your cholesterol.
- **Being overweight.** This may lower HDL ("good") cholesterol.
- **Being inactive.** Not exercising may lower HDL ("good") cholesterol.
- **Age.** Cholesterol starts to rise after age 20.
- **Family history.** If family members have or had high cholesterol, you may also have it.
- **Smoking.** Cigarette smoking damages the walls of your blood vessels, making them likely to accumulate fatty deposits. Smoking may also lower your level of HDL, or "good," cholesterol.

## How is cholesterol tested?

You need a blood test to check your cholesterol. A cholesterol test, also called a lipid panel, measures all of the fats in your blood, including total, LDL, and HDL cholesterol.

High cholesterol levels don't make you feel sick. So the blood test is the only way to know your cholesterol levels.

## How can you lower your risk of heart attack and stroke?

A heart-healthy lifestyle along with medicines can help lower your risk.

The way you choose to lower your risk will depend on how high your risk for heart attack and stroke is. It will also depend on how you feel about taking medicines. Your doctor can help you know your risk. Your doctor can help you balance the benefits and risks of your treatment options.

**Heart-healthy lifestyle** changes can help lower risk for everyone. They include:

- Eating a heart-healthy diet that is rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, and low-fat or nonfat dairy foods.
- Being active on most, if not all, days of the week.
- Losing weight if you need to, and staying at a healthy weight.
- Not smoking.

Changing old habits may not be easy, but it is very important to help you live a healthier and longer life. Having a plan can help. Start with small steps. For example, commit to adding one fruit or one vegetable a day for a week. Add this with a short walk every day and you'll gain healthy momentum quickly.

**Statin medicine** can lower the risk of heart attack and stroke.

- For people whose chance of having a heart attack or stroke is high, taking a statin can be helpful.
- For other people, it's not as clear if they need to take a statin. You and your doctor will need to look at your overall health and any other risks you have for heart attack and stroke.

## Fish

Eating fish may help lower your risk of heart disease. As part of a heart-healthy diet, eat at least 2 servings of fish each week. Oily fish, which contain omega-3 fatty acids, are best for your heart. These fish include salmon, mackerel, lake trout, herring, and sardines.

Fish oil supplements may also help to lower your triglycerides and cholesterol. Seek a fish oil supplement that has been purified from mercury and contains 1000 mg of DHA and EPA omega-3 fatty acids. To avoid any fishy aftertaste, simply freeze your pills.

## Garlic

Garlic is an herb. It is best known as a flavoring for food. But over the years, garlic has been used as a medicine to prevent or treat a wide range of diseases and conditions. The fresh clove or [supplements](#) made from the clove are used for medicine.

Garlic is used for many conditions related to the heart and blood system. These conditions include [high blood pressure](#), [high cholesterol](#), coronary [heart disease](#), [heart attack](#), and "hardening of the arteries" ([atherosclerosis](#)). Some of these uses are supported by science. Garlic actually may be effective in slowing the development of [atherosclerosis](#) and seems to be able to modestly reduce [blood pressure](#).

## **Best solution: KNOW YOUR NUMBERS!**

If you don't know what your cholesterol is, please schedule an appointment with one of our knowledgeable Nurse Practitioners at the Consiglio Wellness Center: 816-224-1740.

For additional information about the CWC and the wellness program in general, please visit us online at [www.totalhealthcampus.com](http://www.totalhealthcampus.com).

Finally, if you'd like to work one on one with a health coach please contact one of our Cigna wellness experts by phone at 855.246.1873 or online at [www.myCigna.com](http://www.myCigna.com).

Now, enter yourself to win a \$25 to gift card by [taking our quick quiz on cholesterol HERE!](#)