

Guidelines for LDL Cholesterol

In all adults aged 20 years or older, a fasting cholesterol profile (total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, high density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, and triglycerides) should be obtained once every 5 years. LDL cholesterol is considered “bad cholesterol” and HDL cholesterol considered “good cholesterol.” Generally speaking, the higher your LDL cholesterol is, the higher your risk of cardiovascular disease. The lower your HDL is, the higher your risk of cardiovascular disease.

LDL Cholesterol: The Primary Target of Therapy

Research from experimental animals, laboratory investigations, and epidemiology indicate that elevated LDL cholesterol is a major cause of heart disease. In addition, recent clinical trials show that LDL-lowering therapy reduces risk for heart disease. For these reasons, elevated LDL cholesterol is the primary target of cholesterol-lowering therapy. As a result, the primary goals of therapy and the cutpoints for initiating treatment are stated in terms of LDL.

Classification of Cholesterol

LDL Cholesterol <100 Optimal 100-129 Near optimal/above optimal 130-159 Borderline high 160-189 High >190 Very high
Total Cholesterol <200 Desirable 200-239 Borderline high >240 High
HDL Cholesterol <40 Low >60 High

What should my LDL be?

According to the most recent guidelines, the treatment goals for LDL cholesterol should be determined by the following risk factors:

- Cigarette smoking
- High blood pressure (BP >140/90 mmHg or on blood pressure medication)
- Low HDL cholesterol (<40 mg/dL)†
- Family history of premature heart disease (heart disease in male first degree relative <55 years; heart disease in female first degree relative <65 years)
- Age (men >45 years; women >55 years)*

If you have Multiple (2+) risk factors, the suggested goal is LDL <130

If you have Zero to one risk factor the suggested goal is LDL <160

In addition, if you have other clinical forms of atherosclerotic disease (peripheral arterial disease, abdominal aortic aneurysm, and symptomatic carotid artery disease) or Diabetes, the goal is LDL <100.

Based on more recent evidence, some physicians may treat people who have diabetes or who have heart disease to a goal LDL of <70 and treat people with risk factors such as high blood pressure to a goal of LDL < 100.