



American Heart Association.
Reduce Your Risk™

WHAT DOES MY LDL CHOLESTEROL NUMBER MEAN?

LDL (low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol, the “bad” cholesterol, can cause fatty buildup (plaque) in your arteries. It’s important to know your number because **too much LDL cholesterol can increase your risk for heart attack and stroke.** High LDL typically does not have symptoms, so it’s important to have your number checked by your health care professional.



What can impact my LDL level?

- **Family history of high cholesterol** - A condition called familial hypercholesterolemia.
- **Age** - LDL can rise with age.
- **Race and ethnicity** - People of Asian Indian, Filipino, Japanese and Vietnamese descent may have higher LDL.
- **Sex** - Until menopause, women tend to have lower LDL than men.
- **Unhealthy eating habits** - Eating too much saturated fat, such as that found in some meat and dairy products.
- **Not being physically active**
- **Tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke**
- **Heavy alcohol drinking**
- **Being overweight**

How Low can I go with my LDL?

- Various research studies on LDL have shown “lower is better.”
- Talk to your health care professional. If you’re healthy, aim for an LDL below 100 mg/dL. **If you have a history of heart attack or stroke and are already on a cholesterol-lowering medication, your health care professional may aim for your LDL to be 70 mg/dL or lower.**

How often should I check my LDL?

Ask your health care professional for the right frequency for you. Generally:

- Healthy **adults 20-39 years old** should have their cholesterol checked **every four to six years.**
- **Adults over age 40**, or those who have heart disease (including prior heart attack) or other risk factors, may need their cholesterol checked more often.

Make a plan that works for you!

Work with your health care professional to create a plan to lower your LDL including regular testing and follow-up appointments to make sure it’s working. They might ask you to:

- ✓ Focus on healthy eating
- ✓ Be physically active
- ✓ Maintain a healthy weight
- ✓ Take medication as prescribed

Be sure to write down questions or concerns and talk to your health care professional if you are struggling with the recommended plan.

The American Heart Association’s LDL-C Awareness Initiative is sponsored by

