

Your HDL (Good) Cholesterol Level

With HDL (good) cholesterol, higher levels are better. Low HDL cholesterol (less than 40 mg/dL for men, less than 50 mg/dL for women) puts you at higher risk for heart disease. In the average man, HDL cholesterol levels range from 40 to 50 mg/dL. In the average woman, they range from 50 to 60 mg/dL. An HDL cholesterol of 60 mg/dL or higher gives some protection against heart disease.

The following can all result in lower HDL cholesterol:

- **Smoking**
- **Being overweight**
- **Being sedentary**

To raise your HDL level:

- **Avoid smoking**
- **Maintain a healthy weight**
- **Do 30–60 minutes of physical activity at least 4 days a week**

People with high blood triglycerides usually also have lower HDL cholesterol and a higher risk of heart attack and stroke. Progesterone, anabolic steroids and male sex hormones (testosterone) also lower HDL cholesterol levels. Female sex hormones raise HDL cholesterol levels.

Your LDL (Bad) Cholesterol Level

The lower your LDL cholesterol, the lower your risk of heart attack and stroke. In fact, it's a better gauge of risk than total blood cholesterol. In general, LDL levels fall into these categories:

LDL Cholesterol Levels	
Less than 100 mg/dL	Optimal
100 to 129 mg/dL	Near Optimal/ Above Optimal
130 to 159 mg/dL	Borderline High
160 to 189 mg/dL	High
190 mg/dL and above	Very High

Your other risk factors for heart disease and stroke help determine what your LDL level should be, as well as the appropriate treatment for you. A healthy level for you may not be healthy for your friend or neighbor. Discuss your levels and your treatment options with your doctor to get the plan that works for you.