

How to Explain Results of Cholesterol Tests

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Mention the word "cholesterol" and some people think about the [foods](#) they love but aren't supposed to eat. Others think about how it relates to heart disease and stroke. However, not all cholesterol is bad.

Difficulty: Moderately Easy

Instructions

things you'll need:

- Blood test results Model of the human heart Charts of normal and abnormal cholesterol levels

- 1 After obtaining permission, secure a printout of the lipid profile from the person's recent blood lipid profile.
- 2 Explain that there are three cholesterol measurements: total cholesterol, low density lipoprotein (LDL) and high density lipoprotein (HDL).
- 3 Explain the risk of high total cholesterol numbers. For otherwise healthy individuals, the total cholesterol should be below 200. For those with other risk factors for heart disease, such as high blood pressure, obesity or diabetes, as well as those who regularly smoke cigarettes, the total cholesterol should be below 185. Refer to the link at the bottom of this article.
- 4 Show the person a diagram or model of the heart's major arteries, explaining that high cholesterol (specifically LDL) can clog the arteries, resulting in a heart attack. LDL levels in the blood should be less than 100.
- 5 Show the person his HDL levels and compare them to healthy levels. Levels higher than 35 are desirable--higher if there are other risk factors present--and can be elevated through daily aerobic [exercise](#).
- 6 Ask the person to make an appointment to have his blood drawn again in six months after making positive changes to his diet and lifestyle. Compare the results.

Tips & Warnings

- Be sure to fast before having blood drawn for cholesterol analysis. Work with your doctor, registered dietitian and exercise specialist to manage cholesterol levels.
- Try not to overreact to any one measurement. Avoid drastic measures to change your cholesterol.

Resources

- [Cholesterol charts](#)