Cholesterol And Triglycerides

Cholesterol is a fatty substance in your blood. Your body makes cholesterol on its own, but cholesterol also comes from the food you eat. If you have too much cholesterol in your blood, it builds up on the walls of your blood vessels. This build-up clogs the blood vessels, especially the ones that keep your heart healthy. When this happens you may start to feel ongoing chest pain. Also, the buildup will get harder over time, making the blood vessels brittle and likely to break. If a vessel gets a small break or tear, a clot or blockage can stop the flow of blood in that vessel. These blockages can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

Good and Bad Cholesterol

When you get your blood tested, you may see different types of cholesterol listed on your results:

- **LDL Cholesterol** - This is the "bad" cholesterol that builds up and causes problems.
- **HDL Cholesterol** - This is "good" cholesterol. It actually helps stop the bad cholesterol from building up. HDL carries cholesterol away to the liver, where it is removed from your blood.
- **Triglycerides** - This is another type of fat in your blood. Triglycerides store calories. They can be released from fat tissue to meet your body's energy needs. However, if you are obese, don't get much exercise, smoke, or eat a lot of carbohydrates, your triglyceride levels may be too high. This will also damage your blood vessels and make it more likely you'll have a stroke, heart attack and heart disease.
- **Total Cholesterol** - This is a measure of all three types (LDL, HDL triglycerides) in your blood.

Here is a simple rule: "You want your LDL to be Low. You want your HDL to be High."

Know Your Numbers

When you get your blood tested, you can learn your cholesterol numbers. These numbers help you know your risk for heart disease. Your doctor can use this information to provide any necessary treatment.

Total Cholesterol	What the Number Means
Less than 200	Healthy
200 to 239	Borderline
240 and higher	Too high

LDL (Bad) Cholesterol	What the Number Means
Less than 100	Healthy
100-159	Borderline
160 and higher	Too High

Triglyceride	What the Number Means
Less than 150	Healthy
150-199	Borderline
200 and higher	Too High

HDL (Good) Cholesterol	What the Number Means
60 and higher	Healthy
40-59	Borderline
Less than 40	Too Low

How to Manage Your Cholesterol

Talk to your doctor if your blood test indicates unhealthy cholesterol numbers. Here are some ways to lower your cholesterol and triglycerides:

- **Lose weight**: If you are overweight, losing even 5-10 pounds can help.
- **Be more active**: Exercise regularly. Try to be active 30 minutes a day. (It doesn't need to be all at once.)
- **Change your diet**:
  - Limit fatty meats, egg yolks, whole milk, full-fat dairy products, and some types of fish.
  - Avoid fried foods, cookies, and crackers.
  - Eat fruits, vegetables, and whole grains (such as dried peas, beans, oats).
  - When cooking, use olive, peanut, and canola oils instead of butter, margarine, palm oil, and coconut oil.
  - Eat fish twice a week. Include fish high in omega-3, such as mackerel, sardines, albacore tuna, salmon, and halibut.
  - Eat a handful of nuts a day, such as walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, pistachio nuts, peanuts, or pecans.
  - Look for foods fortified with sterols and stanols, such as margarine and orange juice. Sterols and stanols help block the absorption of cholesterol.

When lifestyle changes are not enough, your doctor may recommend that you take medicine to help you reach healthy cholesterol levels.