



American Heart Association.  
Reduce Your Risk™

# WHY SHOULD I KNOW MY LDL CHOLESTEROL?

Having a high low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol number — the “bad” cholesterol — can raise your risk of heart attack and stroke. If you’ve had a heart attack or stroke, it’s especially important to know your number.

## How can I check my LDL number?

High cholesterol typically has no symptoms. It’s important to have your cholesterol tested, so you can know your number and risk for heart attack and stroke. Ask your doctor to order a test called a lipid panel that will show four important numbers:

- LDL (bad) cholesterol
- HDL (good) cholesterol
- Triglycerides (most common type of fat)
- Total cholesterol (LDL+HDL cholesterol+20% triglycerides)

## What can I do if my LDL is high?

Talk to your doctor about the right treatment plan for you. Positive lifestyle habits, such as eating healthy and exercising, may help in addition to cholesterol-lowering medications.



**Take action to live a longer, healthier life. Take control of your health by controlling your LDL. You can help motivate your loved ones to know their numbers, too.**

Learn more at [heart.org/LDL](https://heart.org/LDL)



## Does my LDL number affect my heart attack and stroke risk?

Too much LDL cholesterol can lead to a buildup of fatty deposits, or plaques, inside your arteries. These plaques can narrow arteries and reduce blood flow. If a piece of the plaque breaks free, it might travel into the bloodstream and block a blood vessel to the heart or brain, causing a heart attack or stroke.

## What should my LDL number be?

The most recent guidelines from the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology recommend that “**lower is better**” to reduce your risk. Studies show that for healthy adults an LDL at or below 100 mg/dL is ideal for good health. **If you have a history of heart attack or stroke and are already on a cholesterol-lowering medication, your doctor may aim for your LDL to be 70 mg/dL or lower.**