

Cholesterol Screening: Lipid Panel

Your body needs cholesterol to work well. But too much of the wrong kind of cholesterol raises your risk of heart attack, stroke, and other health issues.

High cholesterol rarely causes symptoms.

To know your cholesterol levels, you need to get a blood test.

This simple test is called a “lipid panel.”

Before the test, you may be asked to stop eating or drinking anything but water for several hours.

You may also have to stop taking certain medicines.

Follow your healthcare provider’s instructions for how to get ready.

The lipid panel will tell you your: total cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and triglyceride levels.

LDL cholesterol is sometimes called bad cholesterol. It is the kind that clogs your arteries.

Triglycerides are another form of fat. High levels of LDL cholesterol and triglycerides are not safe for your health.

HDL cholesterol is sometimes called good cholesterol. It sweeps up the LDL cholesterol from your arteries so it can be removed from the body. HDL cholesterol protects you from a stroke or a heart attack.

Once you know your cholesterol levels, you and your healthcare provider will make a plan. If you have high cholesterol, your provider may advise lifestyle changes or medicines to help lower it.

Experts advise a cholesterol screening every 4 to 6 years for adults ages 20 and older.

If you have heart disease or are at high risk, you may need to have your levels checked more often.