

Cholesterol Test: Understanding the Test

So, you want to know about a cholesterol test. This test is usually part of a regular exam. It helps your care provider check your risk of heart disease. For this simple test, you give a sample of blood from your arm or hand.

The test measures the types of cholesterol and other fats in your blood. They include HDL, the "good" cholesterol ... and LDL, the "bad" cholesterol ... which are part of your total cholesterol ... as well as triglycerides, another type of fat in your blood.

Your body needs these fats to build cells, make hormones, and store energy. But having too much cholesterol can cause problems. It can lead to heart disease ... and even to a heart attack or stroke. Knowing your cholesterol levels can help your doctor find out your risk of having a heart attack or stroke.

But it's not just about cholesterol. Your doctor will also use other things to figure out your risk ... like your age, sex, and blood pressure. Then you and your doctor can talk about whether you need to lower your risk ... and the best ways to do that.

Knowing more about why a test is done and what the results mean can help you and your care provider better understand what's happening inside your body ... and what may be your next step in treatment.