

HDL Cholesterol Test

What is the HDL cholesterol test?

This blood test measures a kind of fat (lipid) called high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol. You need cholesterol to make hormones and to build and keep healthy cells. However, too much harmful blood fat can cause problems that increase your risk for heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. HDL, also called good cholesterol, is a type of blood fat that helps the body get rid of other blood fats that are harmful.

Your body makes some cholesterol and gets the rest from foods such as meats, eggs, and milk products.

Tests measuring other types of cholesterol and fats are often done at the same time as the HDL test. Together, these lipid tests are often called a lipid panel.

Why is this test done?

The HDL test helps check your risk for heart disease or atherosclerosis, which is a hardening, narrowing, or blockage of the arteries.

If you are working to improve your cholesterol levels through your diet and exercise habits or by taking medicine, this test can help show how well treatment is working.

How do I prepare for this test?

- Avoid eating fatty foods the evening before your test.
- Don't drink any alcohol for 24 hours before the test.
- Your healthcare provider will tell you when to stop eating and drinking before the test. Food and drink before the test may affect the results.
- Avoid exercise for 12 to 14 hours before the test.
- You may need to avoid taking certain medicines before the test because they might affect the test result. Make sure your healthcare provider knows about any medicines, herbs, or supplements that you are taking. Ask your provider before stopping any of your regular medicines.
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you have any questions about the test.

How is the test done?

Having this test will take just a few minutes. A small amount of blood is taken from a vein in your arm with a needle. The blood is collected in tubes and sent to a lab.

Ask your healthcare provider when and how you will get the result of your test.

What does the test result mean?

Because HDL cholesterol protects against heart disease, higher numbers are better. HDL levels of 60 mg/dL or higher help to lower your risk for heart disease.

A level under 40 mg/dL for men or under 50 mg/dL for women is low and increases the risk for heart disease.

Some of the reasons your HDL level may be low are:

- You smoke.
- You don't get enough exercise.
- You have inherited a tendency to have a low HDL.

What if my test result is low?

Test results are only one part of a larger picture that takes into account your medical history, physical exam, and current health. Sometimes a test needs to be repeated to check the first result. Talk to your healthcare provider about your result and ask questions, such as:

- If you need more tests
- What kind of treatment you might need
- What lifestyle, diet, or other changes you might need to make

Developed by RelayHealth.

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