

Lipid Panel Test

What is the lipid panel test?

This blood test measures different types of cholesterol and triglycerides, which are types of fat in your blood.

Your body makes some cholesterol and gets the rest from foods such as meats, eggs, and milk products. You need cholesterol to make hormones and to build and keep healthy cells. Triglycerides are used by the body for energy. However, too much fat in your blood can cause problems that increase your risk for heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.

Another name for this test is lipid profile.

Why is this test done?

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

Because abnormal levels of lipids do not cause symptoms right away, you may not know that your cholesterol level is high. If this test shows that you have high cholesterol, you can start treatment to lower it and decrease your chances of heart disease. If you already have heart disease, treatment to lower your level of cholesterol can lower your chance of a heart attack and reduce your risk of death from heart disease.

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 do the test results mean?

Total cholesterol: Your total cholesterol should be less than 200 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL).

LDL cholesterol: LDL cholesterol leaves behind fatty deposits on artery walls and contributes to heart disease. LDL is called bad cholesterol. (You can think of "L" for "lousy" cholesterol.) Ask your provider about your risk for heart disease. It will help you know if your LDL is too high.

- If you have a low risk of heart disease, the recommended level of LDL is less than 160 mg/dL.
- If you have a moderate risk for heart disease, your goal is less than 130 mg/dL.
- If you have heart disease, diabetes, or a high risk of heart disease, your LDL should be below 100 mg/dL. For many people with heart disease and diabetes, the goal is less than 70 mg/dL.

HDL cholesterol: HDL cleans the artery walls, removes extra cholesterol from the body, and lowers the risk of heart disease. HDL is called good cholesterol. Because HDL cholesterol protects against heart disease, higher numbers are better.

- A level under 40 mg/dL for men or under 50 mg/dL for women is low and increases the risk for heart disease.
- A level of 60 mg/dL or higher is good and helps to lower your risk for heart disease.

Triglycerides: Generally, it's good to have a triglyceride level lower than 150 mg/dL. Triglycerides higher than this may increase your risk of health problems.

Your LDL cholesterol, triglycerides, or total cholesterol levels may be high or your HDL cholesterol level may be low because:

- You have inherited a tendency to have high cholesterol.
- You smoke.
- You don't get enough exercise.
- You eat too much saturated and trans fat (butter, whole milk, red meat, fried fast food, processed food).
- You are overweight.
- You have hypothyroidism.
- You take certain medicines, such as steroids, beta blockers, or birth control pills.

What if my test result is not normal?

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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