

Overview for Patients

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The National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP) identifies elevated LDL cholesterol as the primary target of cholesterol-lowering therapy.

Understanding LDL cholesterol

LDL, or low density lipoprotein, is one component of your blood cholesterol. LDL carries cholesterol through your bloodstream to help your body build cell walls and produce important hormones. But when there is too much LDL, it sticks to blood vessel walls and blocks the flow of blood. This can lead to heart attacks and strokes, which is why LDL cholesterol is called the “bad” cholesterol.

Why is measuring LDL cholesterol important?

Your LDL value will help your doctor determine if you are at risk of developing coronary heart disease. Your doctor will also look at your total cholesterol value, other lipoprotein values, and heart disease “risk factors.” A high LDL value means there is a greater chance that you will develop heart disease, the single largest cause of death in the U.S. If your LDL is too high, your doctor will recommend lowering it through a combination of diet, exercise, and possibly medication.

How does my doctor determine my LDL value?

Your doctor can request a simple laboratory test (Direct LDL™) to be performed on your blood sample. The test tells your doctor how much “bad” cholesterol is in your blood.

CORONARY HEART DISEASE RISK FACTORS¹

- Are you a man 45 years or older?
- Are you a woman 55 years or older, or past menopause?
- Does your family have a history of premature heart disease?
- Are you a cigarette smoker?
- Do you have high blood pressure?
- Are you a diabetic?
- Is your HDL (“good”) cholesterol too low (less than 35 milligrams per deciliter)?

LDL CHOLESTEROL GUIDELINES²

These guidelines are based on your heart disease risk factors.

- If you have one heart disease risk factor your LDL should be below 160*
- If you have two or more heart disease risk factors your LDL should be below 130
- If you have been diagnosed with heart disease your LDL should be below 100

* These numbers refer to the milligrams of LDL cholesterol in a deciliter of blood serum or plasma.

What if I have questions about the results of my LDL test?

Your doctor is the best person to answer any questions regarding cholesterol testing and the management of elevated cholesterol.

What can I do to manage my LDL?

The best way to control LDL cholesterol — and reduce your risk of heart disease — is to eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly.

A healthy diet limits foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol. As a rule, less than 10 percent of your total calories should come from saturated fat and less than 30 percent from total fat. The amount of cholesterol in your diet should be below 300 milligrams a day³.

Regular exercise has been shown to burn excess saturated fat and LDL, as well as lower blood pressure and the risk of diabetes⁴.

By following your doctor’s instructions, you can help control your LDL — and minimize your chances of developing heart disease.

Ask your doctor for a Direct LDL test.

directLDL.com

FOOTNOTE:

1-4. Expert Panel on Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Cholesterol in Adults. Summary of the second report of the National

Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP) Expert Panel on Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Cholesterol in Adults (Adult Treatment Panel II). JAMA. 1993; 23:3015-3023.