

Lipid Panel



Does this test have other names?

Lipid profile, lipoprotein profile, coronary risk profile

What is this test?

This group of tests measures the amount of cholesterol and other fats in your blood.

Cholesterol and triglycerides are lipids, or fats. These fats are important for cell health, but they can be harmful when they build up in the blood. Sometimes they can lead to clogged, inflamed arteries (atherosclerosis). This may keep your heart from working normally if the arteries of your heart muscle are affected.

This panel of tests helps predict your risk for heart disease and stroke.

A lipid panel measures these fats:

- Total cholesterol
- LDL ("bad") cholesterol
- HDL ("good") cholesterol
- Triglycerides, another type of fat that causes hardening of the arteries

Why do I need this test?

You may need this panel of tests if you have a family history of heart disease or stroke.

You may also have this test if your healthcare provider believes you're at risk for heart disease. These risk factors include:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes or prediabetes
- Overweight or obesity
- Smoking
- Lack of exercise
- Diet of unhealthy foods
- Stress
- High total cholesterol

If you are already being treated for heart disease, you may have this test to see if treatment is working.

What other tests might I have along with this test?

You may also need other tests to look at how well your heart is working. These tests may include:

- **Electrocardiogram(ECG).** This test checks your heart's electrical impulses to see if it is beating normally.
- **Stress test.** For this test you may have to exercise while your ECG is watched for changes.
- **Echocardiogram.** This test uses sound waves to make pictures of your heart.
- **Cardiac catheterization.** A healthcare provider puts a tube into your blood vessels and injects dye. X-rays are then done to look for clogs in the arteries of the heart.

You may also need tests for high blood pressure or blood sugar (glucose).

What do my test results mean?

Test results may vary depending on your age, gender, health history, and other things. Your test results may be different depending on the lab used. They may not mean you have a problem. Ask your healthcare provider what your test results mean for you.

Results are given in milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL). Here are the ranges for total cholesterol in adults:

- Normal: Less than 200 mg/dL
- Borderline high: 200 to 239 mg/dL
- High: At or above 240 mg/dL

These are the adult ranges for LDL cholesterol:

- Optimal: Less than 100 mg/dL (This is the goal for people with diabetes or heart disease.)
- Near optimal: 100 to 129 mg/dL
- Borderline high: 130 to 159 mg/dL
- High: 160 to 189 mg/dL
- Very high: 190 mg/dL and higher

The above numbers are general guidelines, because actual goals depend on the number of risk factors you have for heart disease.

Your HDL cholesterol levels should be above 40 mg/dL. This type of fat is actually good for you because it lowers your risk of heart disease. The higher the number, the lower your risk. HDL levels of 60 mg/dL or above are considered the level to protect you against heart disease.

High levels of triglycerides are linked with a higher heart disease risk. Here are the adult ranges:

- Normal: Less than 150 mg/dL
- Borderline high: 150 to 199 mg/dL
- High: 200 to 499 mg/dL
- Very high: Above 500 mg/dL

Depending on your test results, your healthcare provider will decide if you need lifestyle changes or medicines to lower your cholesterol.

Your results and targets will vary according to your age and health. If you have high blood pressure or diabetes, you're at higher risk of having heart disease. You may have to take medicine to get your cholesterol and triglyceride levels even lower.

How is this test done?

The test is done with a blood sample, which is drawn through a needle from a vein in your arm.

Does this test pose any risks?

Having a blood test with a needle carries some risks. These include bleeding, infection, bruising, and feeling lightheaded. When the needle pricks your arm or hand, you may feel a slight sting or pain. Afterward, the site may be sore.

What might affect my test results?

Being sick or under stress and taking certain medicines can affect your results.

What you eat, how often you exercise, and if you smoke can also affect your lipid profile.

How do I prepare for the test?

You may need to fast (not eat or drink anything but water) for a certain amount of hours before this test. In addition, be sure your healthcare provider knows about all medicines, herbs, vitamins, and supplements you are taking. This includes medicines that don't need a prescription and any illegal drugs you may use.

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