



Normal Values

The average blood cholesterol level for adults in the United States is 210-215 milligrams/deciliter (mg/dl). However, the National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP) of the National Heart, Blood, and Lung Institute recommends the following for people who are over 20 years of age:

Total Cholesterol

Under 200 mg/dl	Desirable
200-239 mg/dl	Borderline-high
240 mg/dl and over	High

Anyone whose reading is above 200 mg/dl should have that test confirmed with another test, especially if a fingerstick was used to get the blood.

If your doctor also measured your low-density lipoprotein (LDL) level, the following guidelines apply:

Low Density Lipoproteins (LDL)

Under 130 mg/dl	Desirable
130-159 mg/dl	Borderline-high
160 mg/dl and over	High

If you already have cardiovascular disease, NCEP recommends a goal of under 100 mg/dl for LDL. Generally, any high-density lipoprotein (HDL) under 35 mg/dl is low. HDL at 60 mg/dl or above is very good and may cancel out other risk factors.

Some factors can influence cholesterol or lipoprotein levels:

- A woman's LDL may be lower and HDL be higher during the menstrual period.
- Birth-control pills can raise LDL and lower HDL.
- Some diuretics can raise triglycerides and total cholesterol.
- Total cholesterol levels can increase during pregnancy and remain elevated for up to 20 weeks after delivery.
- Estrogen replacement therapy can lower total cholesterol and LDL, and raise HDL.
- Total cholesterol levels are highest in the winter and lowest in the summer.

This publication is not intended to replace consultation with health-care professionals. Karen Chapman, RD, PhD, Nutrition Specialist.

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