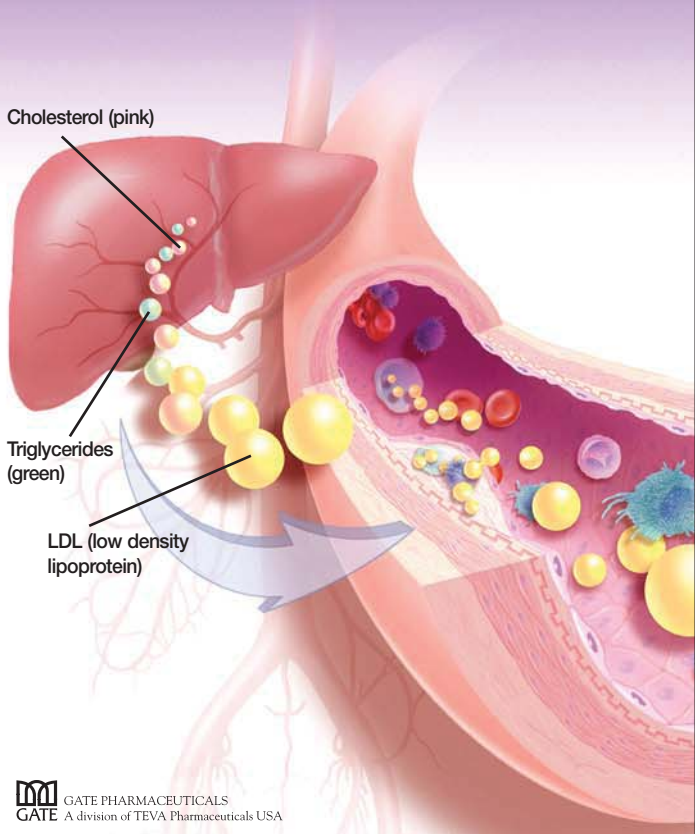


# How Are My Triglycerides?



Cholesterol (pink)

Triglycerides (green)

LDL (low density lipoprotein)

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## Types of Blood Fats (Lipids)...

- LDL Cholesterol (low-density lipoprotein cholesterol *or* LDL-C) – a type of fat in the body which may build up and clog your blood vessels, leading to heart problems.
- HDL Cholesterol (high-density lipoprotein cholesterol *or* HDL-C) – a type of fat which carries the LDL cholesterol to the liver to be cleared from the body. A low HDL-C of less than 40 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL) is bad for your heart, whereas a high HDL-C of 60 mg/dL or higher is good.

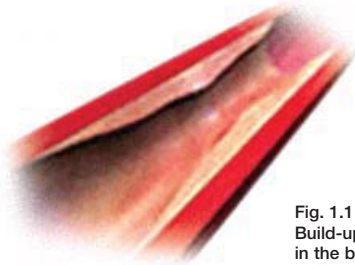


Fig. 1.1  
Build-up of cholesterol  
in the blood vessel

- Triglycerides – fats which may be stored in the body in the form of “triglycerides.” Triglycerides that are too high may also lead to heart problems.

## What Are My Cholesterol Goals?

LDL cholesterol, otherwise known as the “bad cholesterol,” continues to be the main concern for lowering cholesterol. Studies have shown that lowering LDL-C reduces the chance for heart attack or stroke.

How much your LDL-C should be lowered depends on the specific risk level as determined by your doctor. You are placed in a high, moderate, or low risk group based on your medical conditions and risk factors. A risk factor is a condition or behavior that increases your likelihood of having a medical problem.

For example, a person who already has heart disease or diabetes is considered to be in the high risk group. The LDL-C goal for a high risk person would be less than 100 mg/dL.<sup>1</sup> A recent update

suggests that for certain individuals within the high risk group who are considered to be at *very high risk*, a very low LDL-C goal of less than 70 mg/dL may be an option.<sup>2</sup>

Other major risk factors to consider include cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, low HDL-C levels (the “good cholesterol”), a family history of heart disease, and advanced age. Check with your doctor to see what your LDL-C goal should be based on your risks.

### LDL Goals Based on Risk Level<sup>1</sup>

Risk Level	LDL-C Goal (mg/dL)
High	Less than 100
Moderate	Less than 130
Low	Less than 160

## Going a Step Beyond LDL-C Lowering...

Although trying to reach your LDL-C goal is still very important, your risk for heart disease may be further reduced by changing other risk factors such as high triglyceride levels. Triglyceride is blood lipid which by itself has also been linked to heart disease. The examples listed below may lead to increased triglyceride levels:

- Obesity or being overweight
- Lack of physical activity
- Cigarette smoking
- Too much alcohol
- A diet high in fats and sugars
- Certain diseases (e.g., high blood sugar, kidney problems)
- Certain drugs (e.g., steroids, estrogens)
- A family history of certain medical problems



You can determine if you have a normal, borderline high, high, or very high triglyceride level by referring to the following table:

### Triglyceride Goals Based on Risk Level<sup>1</sup>

Risk Level	Triglyceride Goal (mg/dL)
Normal	Less than 150
Borderline High	Between 150 and 199
High	Between 200 and 499
Very High	Equal to or greater than 500

Discuss with your doctor what your cholesterol goals should be.

## How Can I Lower My Triglyceride Levels?

When triglycerides are above normal, you should still work towards reaching your LDL goal. An additional goal would be to lower your triglyceride levels. Healthy changes in diet will help you reach your goal. When making food choices, choose wisely. Consume in moderation, especially foods high in sugar and alcohol, since too much can increase triglyceride levels.

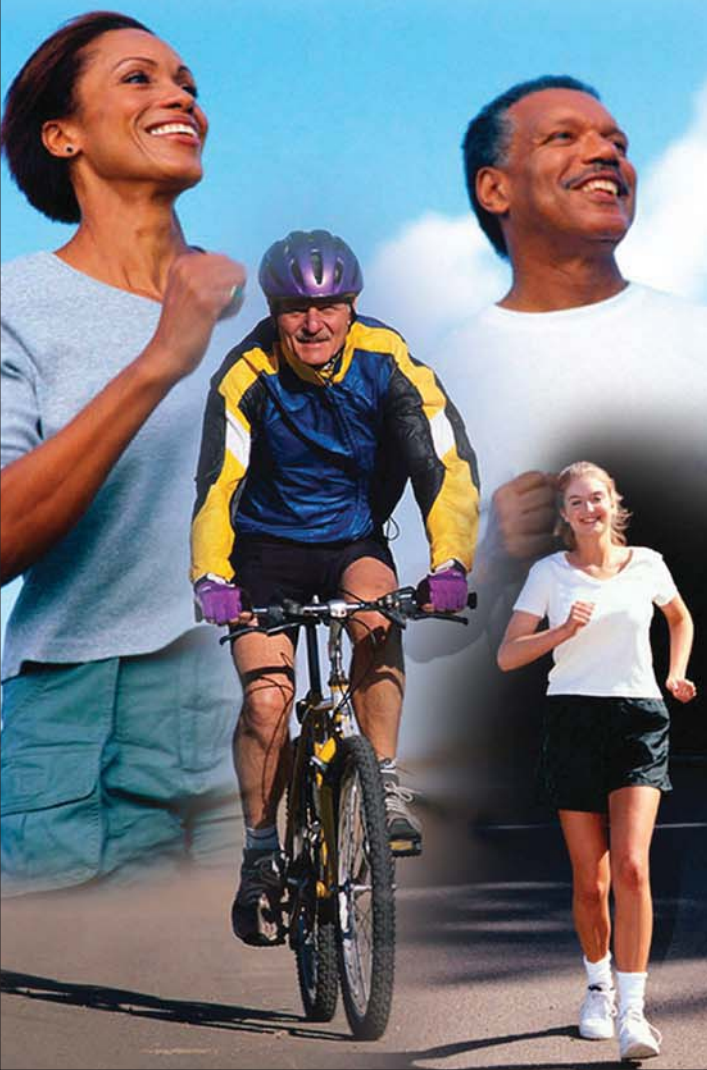
Read food labels carefully and select foods that are good sources of fiber. Examples are:

- **Whole grain foods** – wheat, cornbran, barley, oatmeal, and oatbran cereals.
- **Fruits** – apples, pears, bananas, blackberries, oranges, grapefruit, nectarines, peaches, plums, and prunes.
- **Legumes** – dried beans (black, kidney, lima, navy, northern, and pinto), lentils (yellow, green, and orange), chickpeas, and black-eyed peas.
- **Vegetables** – green beans, cauliflower, potatoes, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and carrots.



*And don't forget to exercise regularly to help you burn off those extra calories.*

Setting and keeping good habits of healthy diet and regular exercise are important parts of your overall plan. But in those cases when diet and exercise are still not enough, medications may be needed to help you reach your goals. The addition of drugs such as niacin or fibrates may be needed to help lower your triglyceride levels in those instances. Discuss with your doctor to decide what plan is best for your specific needs.



## References:

1. National Institutes of Health, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. "The Third Report of the National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP) Expert Panel on Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Cholesterol in Adults (Adult Treatment Panel III): Final Report". [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/cholesterol/atp3\\_rpt.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/cholesterol/atp3_rpt.htm). (August 19, 2004).
2. Grundy SM, Cleeman JI, Merz CN, et al., "Implications of Recent Clinical Trials for the National Cholesterol Education Program Adult Treatment Panel III Guidelines," *Circulation*, July 13, 2004: 227-239.
3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Keep the Beat: Heart Healthy Recipes from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute." [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/ktb\\_recipebk/ktb\\_recipebk.pdf](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/ktb_recipebk/ktb_recipebk.pdf). (August 19, 2004).



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