



# Aging Healthfully Newsletter

Illinois Department on Aging



## Know Your Numbers

With a New Year upon us again, this is the time of year when people usually set goals related to making lifestyle changes, losing weight, or improving their diet.

While maintaining a healthy weight is important for your health, it is important to remember that living a healthy lifestyle is not just about being at your goal weight.

Feeling motivated to make positive lifestyle changes is easier when you learn what your “Numbers” are and where they should be to promote overall health and wellness! It is common for people to be concerned with their outward appearance, but it is what is going on inside of our bodies that is important to our health.

For example, you can be considered overweight and still be in good health, while others can be at a healthy weight, but not be so healthy and have conditions like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and/or heart disease.

**Heart disease, diabetes, and chronic lung disease as a result of smoking are some of the leading causes of death in the United States.**

So, what does it mean to **Know Your Numbers**? In order to maintain a healthy lifestyle, it is important to keep your cholesterol, blood pressure, triglycerides, and blood sugars in a healthy range. Increasing your physical activity, eating a healthy diet, and losing even just a small amount of weight can help keep these numbers in check!

## Cholesterol

Keeping your cholesterol levels in a healthy range helps to lower your risk for developing heart disease or having a stroke and keeps your heart healthy.

**Here is an easy way to remember which type of cholesterol is considered “good” and which one is considered “bad” cholesterol if elevated:**

- **HDL Cholesterol** (the “Good”) - You want to keep it **High** remember the ‘H’ in HDL. You want this type of cholesterol to be high. Having Higher HDL cholesterol is considered to have a protective benefit against heart disease.
- **LDL Cholesterol** (the “Bad”) – You want to keep it **Low**, remember the ‘L’ in LDL. You want this type of cholesterol to be low. Having an LDL cholesterol level near the “Optimal” range (see the chart) is associated with reduced risk for heart disease and stroke.

Types of Cholesterol	Category
<b>Total Cholesterol: Less than 200 mg/dL</b>	Considered a desirable level of cholesterol. This will put you at a lower risk for developing heart disease. A cholesterol level greater than 200mg/dl increases your risk for heart disease.
<b>Total Cholesterol: Between 200 to 239 mg/dL</b>	Considered borderline high cholesterol.
<b>Total Cholesterol: 240 mg/dL and above</b>	Considered high blood cholesterol. A person with a cholesterol greater than 240mg/dl has greater than 2X the risk of heart disease compared to someone with a cholesterol less than 200mg/dl.
<b>HDL Cholesterol: Less than 40 mg/dL (for men)</b> <b>HDL Cholesterol: Less than 50 mg/dL (for women)</b>	Considered low HDL cholesterol, which is a major risk factor for heart disease.
<b>HDL Cholesterol: 60 mg/dL and above</b>	Considered high HDL cholesterol, which is considered desirable and has a protective benefit against heart disease.
<b>LDL Cholesterol: Less than 100 mg/dL</b>	Considered optimal, which is associated with reduced risk for heart disease and stroke.
<b>LDL Cholesterol: 100 to 129 mg/dL</b>	Considered near optimal, slightly elevated.
<b>LDL Cholesterol: 130 to 159 mg/dL</b>	Considered borderline high.
<b>LDL Cholesterol: 160 to 189 mg/dL</b>	Considered high.
<b>LDL Cholesterol: 190 mg/dL and above</b>	Considered very high, which is associated with an increased risk for developing heart disease and having a stroke.

Information courtesy of Mayo Clinic. Reviewed 07/2019.



## Triglycerides

A high triglyceride level is associated with people who have heart disease or diabetes.

Having high triglycerides paired with low HDL cholesterol or having high triglycerides paired with high LDL cholesterol can increase the amount of fatty plaque buildup in your arteries, which increases your risk for developing heart disease, having a stroke, and having a heart attack.

Triglyceride Level	Category
Less than 150 mg/dL	Considered desirable
150–199 mg/dL	Considered borderline high
200–499 mg/dL	Considered high
500 mg/dL and above	Considered very high

Information courtesy of Mayo Clinic. Reviewed 07/2019.

## Blood Pressure

The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends keeping your blood pressure within a healthy range to help reduce your risk of having a heart attack or stroke, developing heart or kidney failure, and peripheral vascular disease.



**This chart displays blood pressure categories defined by the AHA:**

Blood Pressure Category	Systolic mm Hg (upper #)		Diastolic mm Hg (lower #)
<b>Normal</b>	Less than 120	and	Less than 80
<b>Prehypertension</b>	120 – 129	or	Less than 80
<b>High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1</b>	130 – 139	or	80 – 89
<b>High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2</b>	140 or higher	or	90 or higher
<b>Hypertensive Crisis (Emergency care needed)</b>	Higher than 180	or	Higher than 120

Notify your doctor if you are having unusually low blood pressure readings or for questions related to your medications and blood pressure. Information courtesy of the American Heart Association [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org). Reviewed 11/2017.

## **Blood Glucose (Sugar)**

Getting your blood glucose (also known as blood sugars) tested measures your risk for diabetes. See the chart below for both fasting and non-fasting blood sugar levels.

<b>Associated Level</b>	<b>Blood Sugar Range</b>
Normal Level (Someone without diabetes)	Fasting* – Less than 100 mg/dL Two hours after eating – Less than 140mg/dL
Pre-Diabetes Level	Fasting* - Between 100-125mg/dL Two hours after eating – Between 140-199mg/dL
Diabetes Level	Fasting* - Greater than 126mg/dL** Two hours after eating – Greater than 200mg/dL**

\*Fasting refers to not eating or drinking anything with caloric value for at least 8 hours.

\*\*These levels are based on lab/blood tests and should be repeated twice in order to diagnose diabetes

Speak with your doctor or a registered dietitian nutritionist about your blood glucose test/levels to understand your risk and to find out what you can do to improve your numbers or help prevent developing diabetes.

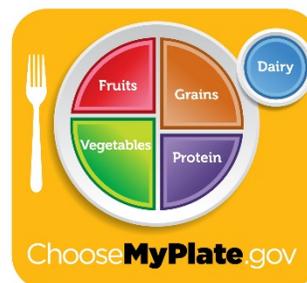
Talk with your doctor to find out how to help prevent or manage high blood pressure, high cholesterol, high triglycerides, and/or high blood glucose.

### **Tips to improve your overall health:**

- If you are overweight, see a registered dietitian about how to lose weight in a safe and healthy way.
- Be physically active every day or exercise at least 150 minutes each week.
- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains as opposed to highly processed foods like sweets and prepackaged snack foods.
- Eat a diet that is high in fiber.
- Quit smoking if you currently smoke.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you consume.

#### **Attachments:**

- Know Your Numbers (AHA)
- Know Your Numbers (Mercy Health)
- High Blood Cholesterol and Triglycerides (AHA)
- Test Your Nutrition Knowledge
- Recipes: Tropical Overnight Oats; Baked Breakfast Portabella



#### **References:**

- <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/heart-stroke/know-your-numbers>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-cholesterol/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20350806>
- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/cholesterol/about-cholesterol/what-your-cholesterol-levels-mean>
- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/the-facts-about-high-blood-pressure>

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<https://www2.illinois.gov/aging/programs/nutrition/Pages/nutrition.aspx>

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