The lipoprotein limbo: Patients can use this guide to make sense of their existing cholesterol levels and figure out how low to go

Testing → Results → Plan of action → Followup

Initial blood test results

Normal Range

18-29 years

Total cholesterol: < 4.7mmol/L
LDL cholesterol: < 3.0mmol/L
HDL cholesterol: > 0.9mmol/L
Triglycerides: < 2.3mmol/L

Aged 30+

Total cholesterol: < 5.2mmol/L
LDL cholesterol: < 3.4mmol/L
HDL cholesterol: > 0.9mmol/L
Triglycerides: < 2.3mmol/L

Mid Range

18-29 years

Total cholesterol: < 4.7mmol/L
LDL cholesterol: < 3.0mmol/L
HDL cholesterol: > 0.9mmol/L
Triglycerides: < 2.3mmol/L

Aged 30+

Total cholesterol: 5.2-6.2mmol/L
LDL cholesterol: > 3.4mmol/L
HDL cholesterol: < 0.9mmol/L
Triglycerides: > 2.3mmol/L

High Range

18-29 years

Total cholesterol: > 5.7mmol/L

Aged 30+

Total cholesterol: > 6.2mmol/L

Lifestyle changes

- quit smoking
- lose weight
- switch to a diet low in saturated fat and trans fatty acids. Some healthy choices include fish or poultry (without the skin) instead of sausages or bacon; baked potatoes instead of French fries; and egg whites to replace whole eggs with yolks.

Lifestyle changes

- like the ones mentioned above

Medications

- like statins, ezetimibe, fibrates or niacin

Followup

Your doctor will specify followup time as this varies depending on the individual

Target lipid levels

For those at **high risk** of heart disease or who have diabetes or atherosclerosis:
LDL: < 2.5mmol/L
Total cholesterol: < 4.0mmol/L

For those at **moderate risk** of heart disease:
LDL: < 3.5mmol/L
Total cholesterol: < 5.0mmol/L

For **everyone** else:
LDL < 4.5mmol/L
Total cholesterol < 6.0mmol/L

Adapted from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada Heart Disease Risk Factors — Cholesterol