

Wellness Ways

The Methodist Hospital, Corporate Wellness • 713.441.5978 • www.methodistcorporatewellness.com

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Skin Protection Tips for Those Who Love the Outdoors

Life is full of tests. But the grades you receive on this one could mean life or death. Strive to get all As in the following subjects and you limit your risk for coronary heart disease, stroke and other life-threatening problems.

Here are the criteria:

- Get an **A** in **Cholesterol Count** if your score is less than 200 milligrams per deciliter of blood (mg/dL). Get a **B** or **B-** if the measurement is between 200 and 239 – this is borderline high and not good. If you receive a score of 240 or higher on the Cholesterol Count, go to summer school. You receive a **C**, **D** or **F** and need to make major life changes to decrease the number.
- **High-Density Lipoprotein (HDL)**, or "good cholesterol," should be over 40 for men and over 50 for women. Get an **A** if you're above these levels. Get further testing for heart disease if you are not. This is one health indicator that's better when higher.
- **Low-Density Lipoprotein (LDL)** is known as "bad cholesterol," and your score in this course depends on many factors. Ideally, a measurement of less than 100 mg/dL is an easy **A**. An LDL score of 100 to 129 is still good, but drops you in the **B** range. Reaching 130 to 149 puts you in the borderline high category and earns you a **C** ranking. From 200 to 500, you are high and very high and receive a **D** or **F** and an immediate trip to the doctor to discuss treatment options. The numbers mean different things depending upon overall health, family background and other factors. With no family history, no coronary heart disease and only one risk factor or none, aim for 160 or below. Two risk factors: shoot for less than 130. For those with coronary heart disease or diabetes, the number should stay under 100.
- **Triglyceride** levels track the most common fat type in your body, and a normal range—or an **A** on the health report card—is less than 150 mg/dL. The **B** to **C** range is 150 to 199 mg/dL and means borderline high. Get a **D** if your numbers are 200 to 499, and an **F** if your score is over 500.

Methodist Wellness Services: Working For YOU

Methodist Health Fairs provide the perfect opportunity to take charge of your life. Fairs are held in work places and at events around the region throughout the year and offer a variety of important screenings and measurements. Get a handle on your blood pressure, cholesterol level, body fat and glucose count in simple, quick tests with immediate results. Find out if you are at risk for diabetes. Through skin cancer screenings, bone density and audiometric testing, as well as heart health indicators and more. Methodist Health Fairs offer important tools to keep you on a healthy life path.

Cholesterol, Triglycerides, Glucose: It's What's Inside That Counts



Incredible rivers of blood flow inside our bodies. These blood rivers ferry nutrients, oxygen and other life-giving and life-sustaining substances, so anything that hinders or obstructs the flow affects our health. We can't see any of this, yet intuitively we know the old adage is at work: it's what's inside that counts.

The different types of cholesterol in our blood are among the most important factors in how our rivers run. The word "cholesterol" has a bad rap, but none of us would want to be without it. **Cholesterol** is important to a healthy body and is used to produce cell membranes, playing a major role in membranes of the brain, the nervous system, the spinal cord and the peripheral nerves.

Humans need cholesterol for the development of both male and female sex hormones as well as for vitamin D and to produce bile salts that help digest foods. Our bodies—mainly in the liver and intestines—produce all the cholesterol we need. When we bring in too much additional cholesterol through the foods we eat, we risk introducing too much of this soft, waxy, fatty substance and it can begin to build up in our blood. This increases our risk for heart disease and stroke. About half of all American adults have too much cholesterol in their blood, according to the American Heart Association.

Two kinds of lipoproteins—small protein and fat packages—carry cholesterol through the body. **Low-density lipoprotein, or LDL**, is referred to as bad cholesterol because too much of this can lead to a cholesterol buildup in the arteries. The good kind is **high-density lipoprotein, or HDL**, which carries cholesterol to the liver, where the liver removes it from the body. The only high number to aim for is a high HDL.

Our bodies also need the most common type of fat, called **triglycerides**, for energy. As with cholesterol, our bodies make these fats, but we also get them from food. Overweight people, those with diabetes and those with high cholesterol often have high levels of triglycerides in their blood, too. A high triglyceride level combined with high LDL or low HDL speeds up the buildup of fatty deposits and increases stroke and heart attack risk.

Another key component in producing energy for our bodies is sugar or **glucose**, and most of the food we eat is turned into glucose to provide this needed energy. Glucose gets into bodies' cells via the hormone insulin, produced in the pancreas. Too much glucose in the blood can lead to different types of diabetes and other health problems. Once again, it's a substance we need, but in the right amounts.

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Cholesterol, Triglycerides, Glucose: It's What's Inside That Counts

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Since we can't see cholesterol, lipoproteins, triglycerides or glucose, how do we know we have a problem? Oftentimes, elevated levels of these produce no outward symptoms. The American Heart Association recommends all adults age 20 and over visit their doctors for a lipoprotein profile every five years. It's a quick blood test given after a nine to 12-hour fast and measures total cholesterol, LDL, HDL and triglycerides.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends testing for glucose levels for anyone overweight and older than 45. For those with other risk factors like high cholesterol or high blood pressure, testing should come earlier and every three years. For those with levels indicating prediabetes, testing is encouraged every one to two years. A fasting plasma glucose test can be done by taking a simple blood sample. An oral glucose tolerance test takes a little longer and involves taking glucose measurements before and after drinking a liquid containing the substance.

For more information, visit www.americanheart.org or www.nhlbi.nih.gov.



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Tips to Getting and Maintaining Good Numbers

Some of our health risks are tied to factors we can't change, like age, gender and family history. But there are more factors we **can** control. Here are some tips – many of them common sense – to help get good scores in cholesterol, HDL, LDL, triglycerides and glucose:

- NO SMOKING.
- Eat a healthy diet, low in fats and cholesterol (avoid fatty meats, butter, cheese, egg yolks, shellfish, organ meats and whole-milk products) and high in fiber (eat plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans and peas, lean meats, skinless poultry, nuts, seeds and fatty fish). The American Heart Association recommends eating a fatty fish such as salmon, albacore tuna, mackerel, lake trout, herring or sardines at least twice a week. The Omega-3 Fatty Acids in fatty fish are believed to help lower triglycerides, blood pressure and plaque buildup in arteries.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes a day, preferably seven days a week.
- Get screened, learn your numbers and talk with your doctor to determine if your scores indicate the need for medications.



Fight the Flu and Improve Your Bottom Line

Keeping your employees healthy and on the job can help to improve your bottom line. The Methodist Hospital Wellness Services will work with you to schedule a time and location that's right for your organization. It's quick, professional and can keep your employees health and productive.

The cost is \$25 per flu shot and can be paid for the employee or the company, or split between the two. The Methodist Hospital Wellness Services will work to accommodate your company's needs.

Call 713-441-0FLU (0358)
for more information.