

Know Your Numbers

Blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels all affect heart health. If you want to be as healthy as possible, it's important to know what your levels mean. Target numbers can be different for each person, but here are some general tips to get you started. Always talk with your doctor about your personal target goals.

Blood Pressure

Your blood pressure is the force of your blood against the walls of your arteries. It is measured as two numbers: **systolic pressure** and **diastolic pressure**.

Systolic pressure is the top number. It is the force of your blood when your heart beats. Diastolic pressure is the bottom number. It is the force of your blood when your heart relaxes between beats.



A single high reading doesn't mean you have high blood pressure, but it's a sign you need to watch your blood pressure carefully.

Classification	Top Number	Bottom Number
Normal	Below 120	Below 80
Elevated blood pressure	120-129	Below 80
High blood pressure – Stage 1	130-139	80-89
High blood pressure – Stage 2	140 and above	90 and above

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a soft, fat-like, waxy substance found in your bloodstream and cells. Your body needs it to stay healthy because it helps produce cell membranes and some hormones. It serves other bodily functions, too. There is "good" and "bad" cholesterol.

Your body makes all the cholesterol it needs, but you can also get it from foods like meat, eggs and dairy products.



Your **total blood cholesterol** reading is the sum of two types of cholesterol: your low-density lipoprotein (or LDL, which is bad cholesterol) and your high-density lipoprotein (or HDL, which is good cholesterol).





HDL = happy cholesterol



LDL = lousy cholesterol

Either high LDL or high HDL can make your total cholesterol high, so knowing your total cholesterol isn't always enough! Talk to your doctor to find out your personal target goals for your HDL and LDL cholesterol.

Total Cholesterol Level	Category
Below 200mg/dL	Desirable 
200-239mg/dL	Borderline High
240mg/dL and above	High 



Blood Sugar

Blood sugar levels, also known as glucose levels, can tell you if you are at risk for or have diabetes. There are two main ways to test your blood sugar: a fasting blood sugar test and an A1c test.

Blood taken after an overnight fast is used for a fasting blood sugar test. You can do this test at home with a lancet (a small, sharp needle) and a glucose meter.

An A1c test is a blood test that tells your average blood sugar level over the past two to three months. It measures the percent of blood sugar attached to your red blood cells.

Fasting Blood Sugar	Category
Below 100mg/dL	Normal
100-125mg/dL	Prediabetes
126mg/dL and above	Diabetes

A1c Level	Category
5.6% and below	Normal
5.7%-6.4%	Prediabetes
6.5% and above	Diabetes



If you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, prediabetes or diabetes, talk with your doctor about ways to keep your numbers at a healthy level. You should talk about your medications, too. Your condition may change over time, which means you might need different dosages or new medications. Healthy lifestyle choices also help keep your numbers at the right level. These can include having a healthy weight, eating a balanced diet and getting at least 30 minutes of cardio exercise five days a week.