



HOW IS HIGH BLOOD CHOLESTEROL DIAGNOSED?

High blood cholesterol is diagnosed by your doctor by:

- Conducting a lipid panel blood test



Lipid panel blood test

This test will measure total cholesterol, good high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, and non-high-density lipoprotein (non-HDL) cholesterol levels in your blood.

You may be diagnosed with high blood cholesterol if your total or non-HDL cholesterol level, which includes LDL cholesterol, is higher than what is considered to be healthy for your age, sex, and health status.

Healthy blood cholesterol levels differ by age and sex

Healthy blood cholesterol levels, by age and sex

Demographic	Total cholesterol	Non-HDL	LDL	HDL
Age 19 or younger	Less than 170 mg/dL	Less than 120 mg/dL	Less than 100 mg/dL	More than 45 mg/dL
Men age 20 or older	125 to 200 mg/dL	Less than 130 mg/dL	Less than 100 mg/dL	40 mg/dL or higher
Women age 20 or older	125 to 200 mg/dL	Less than 130 mg/dL	Less than 100 mg/dL	50 mg/dL or higher



Medical history

Your doctor will ask about your eating and physical activity habits, family history, and other risk factors for high blood cholesterol, heart attack, or stroke. Your doctor may ask whether you have any other signs or symptoms. This information can help your doctor determine whether you have complications or other conditions that may be causing you to have high blood cholesterol.



Physical exam

During your physical exam, your doctor will check for signs of very high blood cholesterol, such as xanthomas (a skin condition in which certain fats build up under the surface of the skin), or signs of other diseases that can cause high blood cholesterol.



Other tests

Your doctor may order some of the following tests for other medical conditions that may be causing your high blood cholesterol:

- Blood tests to check your thyroid hormone levels can help rule out hypothyroidism as a cause of high blood levels of cholesterol or other fats, such as triglycerides. Total testosterone and DHEA sulfate tests can help rule out polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), which can affect cholesterol levels
- Pelvic ultrasound to examine the ovaries and detect cysts, and help rule out PCOS
- Skin biopsy to help rule out inflammatory diseases, such as psoriasis, which can affect cholesterol levels

Always talk to your doctor about what is best for you. Ask your doctor before starting any treatments or making changes in your routine or medicine.

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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