

# AI-01942 Lipids Panel Results

Owner	Ⓒ Rigel Arcayan
Tags	MD
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## Tell me how to read my lipid panel results.

A lipid panel, or lipid profile, is a blood test that measures the fats (lipids) in your blood. These results are an important part of assessing your risk for cardiovascular disease. Here's a breakdown of the key components you'll see on your results and what they mean.

### 1. Total Cholesterol

This is the overall amount of cholesterol in your blood. It's the sum of your LDL, HDL, and about 20% of your triglycerides. While it provides a general overview, it's more important to look at the individual components for a complete picture.

Desirable: Below 200 mg/dL

Borderline High: 200–239 mg/dL

High: 240 mg/dL or higher

### 2. LDL Cholesterol ("Bad" Cholesterol)

LDL, or low-density lipoprotein, is often called "bad" cholesterol. It's the main source of cholesterol buildup in your arteries. When there's too much of it, it can form plaque, which narrows the arteries and increases your risk of a heart attack or stroke. The goal is to keep this number low.

Optimal: Below 100 mg/dL

Near Optimal: 100–129 mg/dL

Borderline High: 130–159 mg/dL

High: 160–189 mg/dL

Very High: 190 mg/dL and above

### 3. HDL Cholesterol ("Good" Cholesterol)

HDL, or high-density lipoprotein, is the "good" cholesterol. It acts like a scavenger, picking up excess cholesterol in your blood and carrying it back to your liver to be flushed from the body. A higher HDL level is associated with a lower risk of heart disease.

Low (risk factor):

- Men: Below 40 mg/dL
- Women: Below 50 mg/dL

Good:

- Men: 40 mg/dL or higher
- Women: 50 mg/dL or higher

Optimal: 60 mg/dL or higher

### 4. Triglycerides

Triglycerides are another type of fat in your blood. They store unused calories and provide your body with energy. High triglyceride levels, especially when combined with high LDL and low HDL, can also increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. It's important to fast before a blood draw for an accurate triglyceride measurement.

Normal: Below 150 mg/dL

Borderline High: 150–199 mg/dL

High: 200–499 mg/dL

Very High: 500 mg/dL or higher

### 5. Important Considerations:

Individualized Goals: The "normal" ranges are general guidelines. Your healthcare provider will interpret your results in the context of your overall health, age, family history, and other risk factors for cardiovascular disease (like high blood pressure or diabetes). For example, someone with a history of heart disease may have a much lower LDL goal than a healthy individual.

Non-HDL Cholesterol: Your non-HDL cholesterol is your total cholesterol minus your HDL. This number includes all the "bad" cholesterol types, and it's also a key

indicator of risk. The goal is for this number to be low.

Units of Measurement: In the U.S. and some other countries, the results are measured in milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL). In other parts of the world, they may be measured in millimoles per liter (mmol/L).

Always discuss your lipid panel results with your healthcare provider to understand what the numbers mean for you and to determine the best course of action.

The LDL/HDL ratio is a useful measure for assessing your risk of cardiovascular disease. It provides a more comprehensive view of your lipid health than looking at LDL ("bad") and HDL ("good") cholesterol levels in isolation.

How to Calculate the LDL/HDL Ratio

The calculation is straightforward: you divide your LDL cholesterol level by your HDL cholesterol level.

$\text{LDL/HDL Ratio} = \frac{\text{LDL Cholesterol}}{\text{HDL Cholesterol}}$

For example, if your LDL is 100 mg/dL and your HDL is 50 mg/dL, your ratio would be:

$\frac{100}{50} = 2.0$

What the Ratio Indicates

A lower LDL/HDL ratio is generally better. It suggests a more favorable balance of cholesterol in your body. A higher ratio indicates a greater risk of plaque buildup in your arteries (atherosclerosis), which can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

- Optimal: A ratio below 2.0 is considered ideal.
- Good: A ratio between 2.0 and 5.0 is generally considered good.
- High Risk: A ratio above 5.0 is considered high and suggests an elevated risk for heart disease.

Why This Ratio Is Important

While individual LDL and HDL numbers are crucial, the ratio can provide additional context. For instance, a person might have a high total cholesterol number, but if their HDL is also high, their ratio could still be in a healthy range. This suggests that the high total cholesterol is less of a concern because a significant portion is the "good" kind that helps clear arteries.

Conversely, a person with an average LDL level but a very low HDL level would have a high ratio, indicating a greater risk. The ratio helps to highlight this imbalance.

### A Note on Other Ratios

While the LDL/HDL ratio is a popular metric, some doctors may also look at the Total Cholesterol/HDL ratio or the Non-HDL Cholesterol (Total Cholesterol - HDL). Non-HDL cholesterol is now considered by some experts to be a more comprehensive predictor of cardiovascular risk, as it includes all the "bad" cholesterol types.

It's important to remember that these ratios are just one piece of the puzzle. Always discuss your lipid panel results with your healthcare provider, who will consider your full medical history and other risk factors to determine the best course of action for your health.