

Fact Sheet for People with Diabetes: Understanding Lipid Tests

Testing for Lipid Levels

People with diabetes are at special risk for cardiovascular (heart and blood vessel) disease. In addition, symptoms of heart disease may be less obvious for someone who has diabetes than for someone who doesn't have the condition. Therefore, it is important to take steps to prevent and diagnose cardiovascular disease early. Having your lipid levels tested annually is one step in controlling cardiovascular health.

What are lipid levels?

Lipid levels are the levels of fat in your blood. High levels of blood fats can damage your blood vessels. The most recognized blood lipid is cholesterol, which is a fat-like substance. There are two types of cholesterol

- HDL-cholesterol (good cholesterol)
- LDL-cholesterol (bad cholesterol)

Another blood lipid is a triglyceride, which is a fat.

How often should my lipid levels be tested?

Your lipid levels should be tested at least once a year.

Will Medicare cover the cost of lipid testing?

If you have diabetes and are covered by Medicare, up to three lipid tests (lipid profiles) a year will be paid for. Your doctor will determine how often you have to get a lipid profile done.

How is a lipid profile done?

Your doctor may ask you to fast for 12 to 16 hours before taking the test. He/she will take a sample of your blood and send it to a laboratory for testing. When the results are returned, your doctor will discuss them with you.

What does a lipid profile measure?

A lipid profile measures blood levels of

- total cholesterol
- HDL-cholesterol
- triglycerides

What should I expect if my lipid levels are high?

Your doctor will try to lower your lipid levels by changing your eating and exercise habits. He/she may also suggest taking medicine that will help you with this goal.

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