SAADI AKADEEMIA

Free guide · Cholesterol

What do your lipid levels really tell you?

9 questions about cardiovascular risk factors.

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SELF-ASSESSMENT

What do your lipid levels really tell you?

Your cholesterol level alone does not tell the whole story. This test helps you understand which additional markers may be worth discussing with your doctor.

For each question, choose one answer that best describes you over the past month. Write down the points and add them up at the end. This takes about 5 minutes.

Question	0 points	1 point	2 points
1. Have your triglycerides been high?	☐ No	☐ Don't know	☐ Yes
2. Has your HDL been low?	☐ No	☐ Don't know	☐ Yes
3. Have you ever had your ApoB or Lp(a) measured?	☐ Yes	☐ Don't know	☐ No
4. Has a close relative had a heart attack or stroke before the age of 60?	☐ No	☐ Don't know	☐ Yes
5. Do you smoke?	☐ No	☐ Previously	☐ Yes
6. Has your blood pressure been elevated?	☐ No	☐ Don't know	☐ Yes
7. Is your waist circumference more than half your height?	☐ No	☐ Don't know	☐ Yes
8. Has your blood glucose or HbA1c been elevated?	☐ No	☐ Don't know	☐ Yes
9. How many times a week do you do physical activity that makes you breathe faster?	☐ 3 or more	☐ 1–2	☐ Never

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RESULT

What your score indicates

Add up the points for all your answers. This test is not a diagnosis—it helps you identify which areas may need attention and what to discuss with your doctor.

Points	What this generally means
0–5	You have few risk factors. It is sensible to have your lipids checked as recommended by your GP.
6–11	You have several risk factors. Discuss measuring ApoB and Lp(a) with your doctor.
12–18	You have many risk factors. Make an appointment with your GP and bring your previous test results.

If you have symptoms that interfere with everyday life, or you take medication, discuss your result with your family doctor. The Academy is an educational platform and does not provide personalised medical advice.

Read the article again: saadiacademy.ee/akadeemia/teemad/kolesterool

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HOW IT WORKS

Cholesterol is not the enemy

Cholesterol is needed for cell membranes, hormones and vitamin D. Problems arise when there are many particles in the blood that carry cholesterol into blood vessel walls. This is why many studies look beyond LDL to particle number (ApoB) and the inherited marker Lp(a).

Marker	What it shows
Total cholesterol	All the cholesterol in the blood – on its own, it tells us little.
LDL	The amount of “bad” cholesterol – the main treatment target in guidelines.
HDL	Associated with better metabolic health, but higher is not always better.
Triglycerides	Often rise alongside insulin resistance.
ApoB	The number of particles that cause atherosclerosis.
Lp(a)	An inherited marker – a single measurement in a lifetime is usually sufficient.
Non-HDL	Total cholesterol minus HDL – a simple additional marker.

There is no scientific consensus on optimal ranges – they are based on individual studies. The laboratory's reference ranges apply.

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A PRACTICAL PLAN

4 weeks towards a heart-friendly lifestyle

Week	Focus	What to do
1	Fibre	Oats, legumes, vegetables, berries. Soluble fibre binds bile in the gut.
2	Fat quality	More olive oil, nuts and fish; fewer processed meat products and baked goods.
3	Physical activity	At least 150 minutes a week of moderate physical activity that makes you breathe faster.
4	Sugar and alcohol	Less sugary food and alcohol – these particularly raise triglycerides.

Simple swaps

Instead of	Try
White bread and pastries in the morning	Porridge with berries and nuts
Sausage, frankfurters	Fish, chicken, legumes
Sweetened yoghurt	Plain yoghurt and berries
Crisps	A handful of nuts

We discuss lipids and metabolism in the Academy’s webinars: saadiacademy.ee/veebinarid

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TESTS

How to prepare and what to ask

- ☐ Does my risk assessment take family history, blood pressure and blood sugar into account?
- ☐ Is it worth measuring ApoB or Lp(a)?
- ☐ Do I need to repeat the test after making lifestyle changes?
- ☐ If the doctor recommends medication – what is the goal, and how will we monitor progress?

In many cases, lipid testing can be done without fasting, but if triglycerides are high, your doctor may recommend a fasting measurement. Ask your laboratory or doctor.

Date	LDL	HDL	Triglycerides	ApoB	Notes

Starting or stopping a statin or any other medication is always a decision for a doctor. If you take medication or have a chronic condition, discuss any changes with your doctor first.

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WORKSHEET

Myths and weekly worksheet

Myth	What science says
“Eggs raise cholesterol in everyone.”	Dietary cholesterol has little effect on most people; responses vary between individuals.
“High HDL always protects you.”	Very high HDL is not necessarily protective.
“A normal weight means a healthy lipid profile.”	Inherited factors, such as Lp(a), are independent of weight.
“Cholesterol is only a concern for older people.”	Risk factors develop over decades.

Daytime	Fibre (yes/no)	Physical activity (min)	Fish / nuts	Alcohol (yes/no)
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				

Ainevahetuse Kood – an 8-week course on understanding metabolism: saadiacademy.ee/kursused

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WHAT NEXT

Explore the topic in more depth at the Academy

We discuss lipids and metabolism in the Academy’s webinars and in the Ainevahetuse Kood course.

Step	What it is	Where to find it
Free resources	Practical guides with worksheets: blood sugar, sleep, the vagus nerve, inflammation, lab tests.	/tasuta-materjalid
Webinars	One topic at a time, with questions and answers.	/veebinarid
Dr Saadi Club	A video lecture, a protocol and a live stream every month. A Facebook community.	/klubi
Ainevahetuse Kood	An 8-week core course for understanding metabolism and developing a daily plan.	/kursused
Book	“Veresuhkru ohtlikud saladused” (published by Varrak).	varrak.ee

Questions: kursused@synage.ee. We will respond as soon as possible. All articles: saadiacademy.ee/artiklid. © Saadi Akadeemia (OÜ Süsivesik). Sisu üle vaadatud: 2026 · järgmine ülevaatus 2027.

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