

QUICK TAKES



Know Your Numbers!

Total Cholesterol

Desirable - Less than 200 mg/dL
High risk - 240 mg/dL and over

LDL

Desirable - Less than 130 mg/dL
High risk - 160 mg/dL and over

HDL

Desirable - 40 mg/dL or over

Triglycerides

Desirable - Less than 150 mg/dL
High risk - 200 mg/dL or over

Blood Pressure

Desirable - Less than 120/80 mm Hg
High risk - 140/90 mm Hg or higher

Source: American Heart Association

Screenings to Save Your Life

Heart disease is the leading causes of death in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 950,000 Americans die of each year of cardiovascular disease. Many of us assume that this is just a fact of life. It's not. With the proper control of blood lipids (cholesterol and triglycerides) and blood pressure, in addition to a healthy diet and exercise, you can reduce your risk.

By getting a set of basic screenings, you'll know your specific risks and be able to understand what steps you should take to improve your heart health. Or, you could find out that you're doing just fine! Either way, you'll be taking control of your health, and that's empowering.

What will your doctor or healthcare professional look for? Here's an overview of the most important screening tests.

Blood Pressure: High blood pressure (hypertension) is sometimes called the "silent killer" because often there are no symptoms. But the consequences can be severe; high blood pressure can lead to heart attack, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, and other serious chronic conditions.

Cholesterol: Cholesterol is a fat-like substance that occurs in your body naturally and is needed to function normally. The body only uses a small amount, so any excess is deposited in the arteries, which can then narrow and block blood flow, potentially leading to heart disease. These are the numbers that you should be paying attention to:

- Total cholesterol: includes your LDL, HDL and all other lipoproteins.
- Low-Density Lipoprotein (LDL): considered the "bad" cholesterol because it transports most of the cholesterol through the body and drops damaging deposits.
- High-Density Lipoprotein (HDL): considered the "good" cholesterol because it can reduce your risk of heart disease by transporting cholesterol away from arteries.
- Triglycerides: hormones regulate the release of these fats to meet the body's energy needs between meals. High levels can increase your risk for heart disease.

Take Action!

1) Get Your Screenings

You can get your blood pressure and cholesterol checked by your doctor or by other health professionals at health fairs, mobile screening units or local wellness centers.

2) Change Your Lifestyle

After you get your screening results, ask your doctor what actions you can take to reduce your risk. There are three tips that apply to everyone:

- Achieve or maintain a healthy weight.
- Get regular exercise.
- Don't smoke!

If your blood pressure is high, your doctor will emphasize reducing your sodium intake, and possibly getting more potassium in your diet.

If your cholesterol levels are high, your doctor will most likely emphasize changes in diet such as

- Reducing saturated and trans fat (found in red meat, vegetable oils)

Consuming more monounsaturated fats (found in olive oil and canola oil) and omega 3 fatty acids (found in fish and some nuts).

Routine Checkups

Going to your physician for a checkup is a great way to find out your health status. A doctor's appointment gives you time to ask questions and gather information about your health.

During your visit the doctor should:

- Discuss your complete medical history, including your family history, current conditions, and past illnesses
- Perform routine screenings
- Provide necessary immunizations
- Discuss prevention and management of diseases and conditions

Routine screenings that your doctor will perform or schedule include:

- **Cholesterol Levels:** Have your cholesterol checked at least every 5 years, starting at age 35 for men and 45 for women. If you smoke, have diabetes, or if heart disease runs in your family, start having your cholesterol checked at age 20.
- **Blood Pressure:** Starting at age 18, have your blood pressure checked at least every 2 years if your reading is less than or equal to 130/80. For higher levels, have it checked more frequently.
- **Colorectal Cancer Tests:** Have a test for colorectal cancer starting at age 50. Your doctor can help you decide which test is right for you. How often you need to be tested will depend on which test you have and how frequently you should be screened.

- **Sexually Transmitted Diseases:** Talk to your doctor to see whether you should be screened for STDs and HIV.

For women screenings include:

- **Mammogram:** Women age 40 and older should have a mammogram every 1 to 2 years. If there is family history of breast cancer, check with your doctor to see if you should be screened earlier than age 40.
- **A Pap test (also called Pap smear)** This can help detect cervical cancer. The recommendation is to have a Pap test within 3 years of becoming sexually active or at age 21, whichever comes first. Tests should be repeated annually.
- **Osteoporosis:** This is more common in women because they have less bone tissue and lose bone more rapidly than men. The recommendation is to have a bone density test at age 65. If you are between the ages of 60 and 64 and weigh 154 pounds or less, talk to your doctor about whether you should be tested.

For men screenings include:

- **Prostate cancer:** There are two types of screenings. One is a blood test known as the prostate-specific antigen or PSA test; the other is called a digital rectal examination, DRE. Men between 50 and 70 years old should talk with a physician about whether they would benefit from a screening for prostate cancer.

Bean and Hominy Soup

Makes: about 9 cups, for 6 servings | 30 minutes

Ingredients

2 teaspoons olive oil
1 medium onion, chopped
1 large carrot, diced
1 medium red bell pepper, diced
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 1/3 cups frozen corn kernels
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
6 cups low-sodium chicken broth
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 15-ounce (450-g) can hominy, rinsed and drained
1 15-ounce (450-g) can black beans, rinsed and drained
1 cup (6 oz/180 g) frozen baby lima beans, thawed

Preparation

1. Heat olive oil in a large, heavy saucepan over medium heat. Add onions, carrots, bell peppers and garlic. Cook, stirring until just tender, about 5 minutes.
2. Stir in cumin and cook for 1 minute. Add broth, corn kernels and salt. Bring the soup to a gentle boil and simmer for 5 minutes.
3. Stir in hominy, black beans and lima beans. Cover and cook over medium-low heat for 15 minutes. Ladle the soup into bowls.



Photo Source: ©Ellen Silverman/Matria Healthcare

Nutrition Facts: Per Serving – 196 Calories, 3.0g Fat, 0.6g Saturated fat, 0g Trans fat, 9.0g Protein, 36g Carbohydrate, 8.4g Fiber, 525mg Sodium