Lipid Blood Tests

Blood lipids are fats found in the circulation. Cholesterol and triglycerides are the two main lipids measured for determining your risk of getting heart and blood vessel diseases. The cholesterol in the blood is attached to two different molecules called lipoproteins. HDL is the beneficial high density lipoprotein cholesterol which reduces coronary risk. Low density lipoprotein cholesterol, the LDL, carries an increased risk for heart and vascular disease when it is high. Most of the body's fat tissue is in the form of triglycerides. Medical conditions that elevate the blood triglyceride level include diabetes, thyroid, kidney, and liver diseases.

A lipid panel usually includes the total cholesterol, LDL, and HDL blood levels. For best results, you should fast overnight before the blood tests are drawn. The following risk factors are generally accepted for different lipids:

- **LDL** - Below 100 means low risk, 130-160 borderline risk, 160-190 high risk, above 190 is considered very high risk.
- **HDL** - Below 40 means high risk, 40-60 average risk, 60 and higher means a reduced risk for heart and blood vessel diseases.
- **Total cholesterol** - Below 200 means low risk, 200-240 is borderline risk, above 240 is higher risk.
- **Triglycerides** - Below 200 means low risk, 200-400 borderline risk, above 400 means increased risk.

Many factors contribute to lipid levels including genetics, diet, exercise, body fat and medications. Reducing saturated fats in the diet and increasing fiber with fruits, vegetables and whole grains have been shown to improve blood lipids. Drugs may be prescribed to lower lipids if diet and exercise alone do not help bring the cholesterol levels under control.

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