



Heart-healthy numbers to know

Cardiovascular disease is the number-one killer in the world. But one is not the most important number you should know.²⁰ By knowing—and changing—some key numbers related to your own health, you can become more heart-healthy.

Body mass index²¹

Body mass index measures body fat based on your weight and height. Although it can overestimate fat in athletes and underestimate fat in older adults, it's a good indicator of how much fat you're carrying. This BMI calculator is a useful tool: https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_bmi/english_bmi_calculator/bmi_calculator.html

Waist size²²

A waist circumference of greater than 40 inches in men or 35 inches in women is associated with an increased risk of heart disease. And fat around the waist heightens the risk more than fat around the hips, especially in women.²³ This waist measurement guide is useful: https://extras.bhf.org.uk/patientinfo/waist-measurement_v1.0/app/

Underweight
<18.5

Normal weight
18.5–24.9

Overweight
25–29.9

Obesity
>29.9

20 <https://ourworldindata.org/causes-of-death>

21 https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/risk.htm#limitations

22 https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/risk.htm#limitations

23 <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/belly-fat-linked-with-higher-heart-disease-risk-2018072614354>

24 <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/in-depth/high-blood-pressure/art-20045868>

25 <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/high-blood-pressure-hypertension/>

26 <https://watchlearnlive.heart.org/index.php?moduleSelect=chlsr>

27 <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/cholesterol/about-cholesterol/what-your-cholesterol-levels-mean>

28 <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/cholesterol-test/about/pac-20384601>

29 <https://medlineplus.gov/cholesterollevelswhatyouneedtoknow.html>

30 <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/cholesterol-test/about/pac-20384601>

31 <https://www.healthline.com/health/what-is-basal-metabolic-rate>

Blood pressure²⁴

Uncontrolled high blood pressure can damage the arteries, force the heart to work harder and lead to heart attack and stroke, as well as damage to the kidneys, eyes and sex organs. Ideally your blood pressure should stay below 120mmHg (systolic)/80mmHG (diastolic).²⁵

Cholesterol score^{26 27 28}

You may have heard that you should keep your cholesterol level below 200. The truth is a little more complicated because three substances affect your cholesterol score:

HDL + LDL + 20% Triglyceride = Cholesterol Score

High-density lipoproteins (HDL or “good” cholesterol) clean up artery walls. Low-density lipoproteins (LDL or “bad” cholesterol) clog artery walls. Triglycerides are a type of fat that can indicate an elevated risk of coronary artery disease. If your triglyceride and LDL numbers are high and your HDL levels are low, you run an increased risk of heart disease.

Basal metabolic rate

Your basal metabolic rate measures how many calories your body needs to sustain basic life functions.

You can calculate your BMR online (try this one: <https://www.diabetes.co.uk/bmr-calculator.html>) or use the Harris-Benedict formula:

Men: $BMR = 66 + (13.7 \times \text{weight in kg}) + (5 \times \text{height in cm}) - (6.8 \times \text{age in years})$

Women: $BMR = 655 + (9.6 \times \text{weight in kg}) + (1.8 \times \text{height in cm}) - (4.7 \times \text{age in years})$

Adult cholesterol targets^{29 30}

| Type of cholesterol | Healthy level |
|--------------------------|--|
| Total cholesterol | Less than 200mg/dL (5.2 mmol/L) |
| LDL | Less than 100mg/dL (2.6 mmol/L) |
| HDL | Men: 40mg/dL or higher (1 mmol/L) Women: 50mg/dL or higher (1.3 mmol/L) |
| Triglycerides | Less than 150mg/dL (1.7 mmol/L) |

To determine how many calories you should consume to maintain your current weight, factor in your level of physical activity:

| Activity level | BMR adjustment |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Sedentary | Multiply BMR by 1.2 |
| Lightly active | Multiply BMR by 1.375 |
| Moderately active | Multiply BMR by 1.55 |
| Very active | Multiply BMR by 1.725 |
| Extra active | Multiply BMR by 1.9 |

The beat goes on: Move more. Stress less. Live heart-healthy.

Heart-healthy resources hub: <https://www.aetnainternational.com/en/about-us/explore/heart-health-support-resource.html>

Health Hub: <https://www.aetnainternational.com/members/login.do>

Unlike family history and other uncontrollable factors, all of these numbers can be changed. Talk with your doctor about what combination of diet, exercise and medication is right for you. At our Heart healthy resources hub, Aetna International members can find the information, tools and support needed to prevent and manage heart-related conditions. Aetna International members can also find help and resources in the Health Hub. For more information about your health care benefits, contact your plan sponsor or one of Aetna International's expert sales consultants for group business or individuals and families.