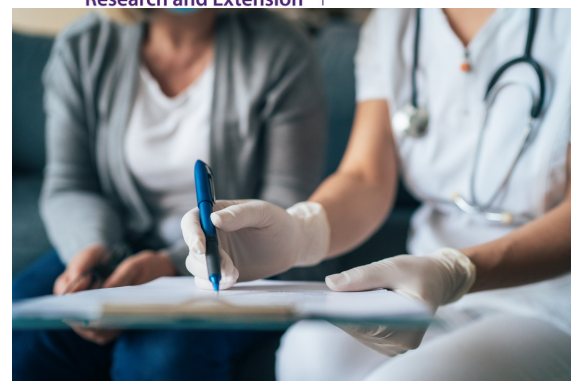


Know Your Numbers for a Healthy You

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I recently completed my annual wellness checkup, including the essential step of having my blood drawn. While I tend to procrastinate on this particular task, I am well aware of its vital importance. Now, let me share some valuable insights on the significance of knowing your numbers:

Cholesterol

- A waxy substance found in the fats (lipids) in your blood crucial for building and maintaining healthy cells and hormones. It has no symptoms so many people may not be aware of their risk.
- The recommended target cholesterol level is less than 200 milligrams per deciliter of blood.
- About 25% of cholesterol comes from food (meat, fish, dairy), and the rest is produced by the body.
- There are two forms of cholesterol
 - Low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL)* – also known as the “bad” cholesterol much can form plaque, clogging arteries and leading to heart disease and stroke.
 - High-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL)* – the “good” cholesterol, helps clean the artery walls and removes excess bad cholesterol.

Triglycerides

- A type of fat in the bloodstream that provides energy for body tissues to function
- Like cholesterol, high triglyceride levels (over 200 mg/dL) increase the risk of heart disease.
- Dietary and lifestyle changes help lower triglyceride levels:
Avoid fatty foods and foods high in cholesterol such as processed meat, fried food, and whole-fat dairy products; choose to eat fruits, vegetables, and nonfat or low-fat dairy; opt for foods high in good, unsaturated fats.

Blood Pressure

- Is the force of blood against the walls of your arteries and can vary due to many factors
- Normal blood pressure is usually less than 120/80 mm Hg (millimeters of mercury)
- Hypertension (High Blood Pressure) Facts
Factors like age, diet (too much sodium, too little potassium, calcium, magnesium), excess alcohol, smoking, obesity, high cholesterol, lack of exercise, stress, and insulin resistance can contribute. It often has no obvious symptoms but can damage the heart, brain, eyes, and kidneys.
- Hypotension (Low Blood Pressure) Facts
Happens when blood flow is lower than normal and can be caused by dehydration and nutrient deficiency. Signs can include dizziness, lightheadedness, fainting, thirst, lack of concentration, blurred vision, nausea, and fatigue.

Blood Sugar

- Blood sugar, or glucose, is a type of sugar in the blood and is a primary fuel for the body. It comes from carbohydrates including sugars, starches, and fiber.
- The Mayo Clinic emphasizes the importance of a balanced diet with healthy carbohydrates including: Fiber-rich fruits and vegetables without added sugar, whole grains, Low-fat dairy, beans and legumes, and limited sugar
- Fasting blood sugar, which is measured six to eight hours after a meal provides an accurate measure in non-diabetic individuals.
- The normal range of blood sugar is approximately 70 to 100 milligrams per deciliter. After a meal, blood sugar will rise but not usually above 135 to 140 milligrams per deciliter, leaving a fairly narrow range of blood sugar throughout the entire day.

Track Your Heart Health Stats, Together

Keeping a log of your blood pressure, weight goals, physical activity, and if you have diabetes, your blood sugars, will help you stay on a heart-healthy track. Ask your friends or family to join you in the effort. Check out NHLBI's my health tracker here: <https://bit.ly/3OfjjEF>.

Today's information comes from Keys to Embracing Aging: Know Your Health Numbers Fact Sheet. More information, contact Tara Solomon-Smith, tsolomon@ksu.edu, or call 620-244-3826.