

Ten Numbers You Should Know

By Susan Locke, M.D., Healthnetwork Medical Director

Some numbers you want to know – some you want to forget (like how old you are). Knowing your “healthy” numbers is a great way to establish baselines and determine what you may need to change to maintain optimal health. Listed below are some of the more important numbers that you should know to be at your healthiest. We also recommend that you discuss your own particular levels with your physician.

10. Blood lipid values

Triglycerides are the chemical form in which most fat exists in food as well as in the body. Normal Triglyceride levels are considered to be less than 150.

Total cholesterol levels should be less than 200; LDL (“bad”) cholesterol should be less than 130; and HDL (“good”) cholesterol should be greater than 40.

Elevations in total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol and/or triglycerides may contribute to cardiovascular disease. If you have other risk factors for cardiovascular disease, total cholesterol and LDL levels should be lower.

9. Fasting blood sugar

A fasting blood sugar level of 70 - 99 would be considered normal. Higher levels may be an indication of diabetes or glucose intolerance.



8. Body Mass Index (BMI)

BMI is used as a screening tool to identify possible weight problems for adults. The normal range for an adult is 18.5 - 24.9. Here is how you calculate BMI:

$$\text{BMI} = \left(\frac{\text{Weight in Pounds}}{(\text{Height in inches}) \times (\text{Height in inches})} \right) \times 703$$

7. Waist circumference

With a cloth measuring tape, measure your waist circumference just above the hip bones. Circumferences for males should measure less than 40 inches; females less than 35 inches. Increased girth can signify an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

6. Daily fat intake

Not all fats are bad – the key is moderation. The recommended amount of fats in your diet should be less than 30% of your total caloric intake. Saturated fats should be less than 10%.

5. Minutes of physical activity

Regular aerobic activity, such as walking, biking or swimming, can help you live longer and healthier. The recommended amount is 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least 5 days per week.

4. Hemoglobin

Normal ranges found in hemoglobin tests are 13-18 (men) and 12-16 (women). Low hemoglobin indicates anemia.

3. PSA Screening (men)

Most doctors consider a PSA level below 4.0 to be normal. Elevation of PSA levels may indicate prostate enlargement due to hypertrophy, inflammation or prostate cancer.

2. Blood Pressure

Normal blood pressures are considered to be less than 140/90. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease (stroke, heart attack or heart failure) or kidney failure.

1. The most important “healthy” number to keep on hand – Healthnetwork’s phone number!

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Prescription for a Better Life



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www.healthnetworkfoundation.org.

Have a health question you want to ask Dr. Locke? Send an email to help@healthnetworkfoundation.org. All inquiries are kept private and confidential.

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