

HEALTH TOPIC:

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

*(Excerpted from **HEALTHY AGING**, the newsletter of The Health Promotion Unit.)*

In 2005, resolve to know three sets of numbers that are vital to good health: your cholesterol, glucose and blood pressure levels.

Your glucose and cholesterol levels are measured when you take a blood test. Glucose is the fuel that the body uses to function. The hormone insulin helps glucose enter the cells of the body. Diabetes develops when this process breaks down and blood glucose levels rise dangerously. A reading of 126 milligrams or more of glucose indicates diabetes.

There are two types of cholesterol. Low density lipoprotein (LDL) clogs arteries, while high density lipoprotein (HDL) helps keep arteries clear. The cholesterol reading should be under 200 and is a combination of the HDL and LDL levels. The LDL should be 100 or lower. The HDL should be at least 60.

Blood pressure is the force created as the blood flows through the arteries. The reading is written as a fraction. The top number, the systolic pressure, represents the force created during a heartbeat. The bottom number, the diastolic pressure, shows the amount of force produced between beats. A reading of 140/90 or higher indicates hypertension.