

Triglycerides and Diet

What are triglycerides?

Triglycerides are a type of fat found in blood and food, made in the liver and stored in body tissues. They are used for energy and stored as body fat. When you drink alcohol or eat more calories than your body needs, the liver produces more triglycerides. Eating too much sugar and fat or drinking alcohol causes triglycerides to rise. High triglycerides may increase your risk for heart disease.



What is a normal triglyceride level?

Your Triglyceride Level	Normal	Borderline High	High	Very High
	Less than 150 mg/dL	150 to 199 mg/dL	200 to 499 mg/dL	500 mg/dL or higher

When are triglycerides measured?

Your health care provider can check your triglycerides levels as part of a test called a “total lipid profile”. Everyone over the age of 20 should have a total lipid profile which includes total cholesterol, HDL “good”cholesterol, LDL “bad”cholesterol and triglycerides, at least every five (5) years.

Note: Since blood triglycerides rise after a meal, you should fast (nothing to eat or drink but water) for 12 hours before the test for accurate results.

How can you lower high blood triglycerides?

- ◆ Lose weight and/or maintain a healthy weight.
- ◆ Increase daily physical activity like walking, cycling or swimming to at least 30 minutes a day on most or all days of the week.
- ◆ Avoid alcohol if possible. Even small amounts can cause large changes in triglycerides.
- ◆ If you smoke, stop.
- ◆ Eat high fiber foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans.
- ◆ Eat low fat protein, such as 1% or non-fat milk, cheese or yogurt, baked or broiled fish, lean chicken or turkey or tofu with each meal.
- ◆ Cut back on saturated fats like meat, butter, whole milk, and cheese and cut out trans-fat. Substitute small servings of olive and canola oil when fats are needed.



- ◆ Avoid or limit simple sugars such as table sugar, honey, syrup, and items made with them.
- ◆ Read food labels to check fat and sugar content. Select reduced fat foods and limit sugar to no more than 1 to 8 grams per serving.
- ◆ Eat more fish such as salmon, mackerel, lake trout, herring, sardines and albacore tuna. They have omega–3 fatty acids, which may help keep your triglyceride level stable.
- ◆ Avoid fried food.
- ◆ Discuss with your doctor whether or not you need medication or supplements.

Limit Fat and Sugar in Diet	
Try	Instead of
artificial sweetening	sugar
whole wheat toast	doughnut
whole fruit	fruit juice
unsalted pretzels	potato chips
olive or canola oil	butter

Resources

1. American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org
2. American Dietetic Association: www.eatright.org
3. National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute: www.nhlbi.nih.gov