

# Triglycerides: What You Need To Know

## Triglycerides

Triglycerides are a type of fat carried through the bloodstream. Triglycerides are found in fat from foods or made in your body from carbohydrates. Unused calories from food are turned into triglycerides and stored in fat cells.

## High Levels of Triglycerides

Triglycerides and cholesterol move through your blood in packages known as lipoproteins.

Triglycerides often have high levels of low density (known as LDL or “bad”) cholesterol and low levels of high density (known as HDL or “good”) cholesterol. This can cause a build-up of plaque (fatty deposits) in blood vessels.

High levels of triglycerides, known as hypertriglyceridemia, put you at risk for:

- heart disease
- stroke
- pancreatitis, an inflammation of the pancreas. (The pancreas helps you digest food and releases hormones that helps your body use glucose.)

Hypertriglyceridemia may occur with diabetes or certain medicines.

## Test for Your Triglyceride Level

Your health care provider can measure your triglyceride and cholesterol levels with a blood test. It’s best to have the test after you fast (don’t eat or drink overnight). Avoid alcohol 48 hours before a test.

## Triglyceride Guidelines

The following chart shows fasting blood triglyceride level guidelines for adults.

Triglycerides	Level
Normal	less than 150 mg/dL
Borderline — high	150 to 199 mg/dL
High	200 to 499 mg/dL
Very high	500 mg/dL or higher

## How to Lower Triglycerides or Cholesterol

If you need to lower your triglyceride level, there are several lifestyle changes you can make.

- Reduce the amount of fat, saturated fat and cholesterol in your diet.
  - Eat fatty fish and plants high in omega-3 fatty acids:
    - albacore tuna, salmon, mackerel, herring, rainbow trout, sardines
    - flaxseed, flaxseed oil, soybeans, soybean oil, canola oil, walnuts.

**(over)**

- Eat monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats instead of saturated fats:
  - monounsaturated fats include olive, peanut and canola oils (Avocados and most nuts are also high in monounsaturated fats.)
  - polyunsaturated fats include corn, safflower, sunflower, soybean, cottonseed, olive and sesame seed oils.
- Limit the amount of red meat you eat. Choose lean cuts of meat and prepare it the most healthy way possible: boil, broil, bake, roast, poach, steam, saute, stir-fry with a small amount of recommended oil.
- Limit sweets and refined sugar. Examples are:
  - candy, cakes and other desserts, soda, fruit drinks and other beverages that contain sugar.
- Limit refined grains. Refined grains have gone through a process that removes the bran and germ. This gives the grain a finer texture but it removes the fiber, iron and many B vitamins. Examples are:
  - white bread, white rice, macaroni, spaghetti, couscous, crackers, corn tortillas flour tortillas.
- Eat whole grains. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel (the bran, germ and endosperm). Whole grains contain fiber and many vitamins and minerals. Examples are:
  - brown rice, buckwheat, bulgur, oatmeal, popcorn, whole grain barley and cornmeal, wild rice, sorghum, and whole wheat bread, crackers, pasta and tortillas.
- Lose weight if you are overweight. A healthful, reduced-calorie diet will help you maintain a good body weight and help lower your cholesterol.
- Get regular exercise. You should try to be physically active for 30 minutes on most, if not all, days of each week.
- Reduce the amount of alcohol you drink. Alcohol can cause a spike in your triglyceride levels.
- If you use tobacco, quit. Your health care provider can give you resources for quitting if you need.
- If you have high blood pressure, follow your health care provider's directions.
- If you take or need to take medicines to lower your cholesterol and/or blood pressure, take them as directed.

Talk with your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns.

**Portions of this information is from the National Institutes of Health.**