

# TRIGLYCERIDES:

## What you need to know



CONSULTING  
CARDIOLOGISTS, PC

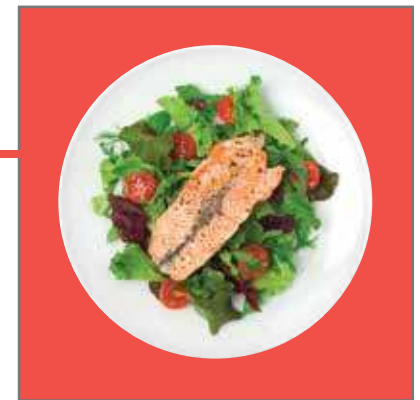
### High triglycerides may increase your risk for heart disease

Triglycerides (mg/dL)	Level
Less than 150	Normal
150–199	Borderline high
200–499	High
500 or greater	Very high*

\*If you have very high triglycerides and feel abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, it is important to talk to your health care provider right away. This can be a life-threatening condition.

### Healthy eating

Healthy food choices can help lower your triglycerides. Cut down on calories, portion sizes, fats and added sugars, especially if you are overweight. Using a smaller plate can help you eat fewer calories. If you have triglycerides that are high or extremely high, you may need to follow a very low fat diet or eat only certain kinds of fats. Talk with your nurse, doctor or registered dietitian if you have questions about how much fat is okay for you.



### What are triglycerides?

Triglycerides (TG) are fats found in the blood. **Lower is better.**

### What increases triglycerides?

- Unhealthy eating
- High blood sugar/diabetes
- Inactive lifestyle
- Overweight/obesity
- Some medications
- Certain illnesses
- Excess alcohol use
- Family history or inherited conditions

#### Vegetables & fruits

- Eat at least 4-6 servings of vegetables and whole fruits every day. Choose fresh or frozen with "no added sugars."
- Limit fruit juice to ½ cup each day.

##### Examples of one serving:

- 1 cup raw or ½ cup steamed vegetables
- 1 medium apple

#### Whole grains & high-fiber

- Choose fiber-rich foods: whole grain bread, cereal, pasta, brown or wild rice, beans and legumes.
- Limit simple carbohydrates: white bread, white rice and pasta.

##### Examples of one serving:

- 1 slice of whole-wheat bread
- ½ cup brown rice or oatmeal

#### Limit sweets & added sugars

- Choose water, low-fat milk, coffee, unsweetened tea.
- Limit soft drinks, sweet tea, sports and energy drinks, sweets and baked goods.

##### Examples of one serving:

- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- 1 Tbsp. jam or jelly

#### Choose "good" fats

- Choose olive, canola or peanut oil, almonds, cashews, pecans, walnuts and peanuts, peanut butter, flaxseed and avocado.
- Choose fatty fish like salmon, trout, albacore tuna or mackerel at least 2 times per week.
- Remember that even "good" unsaturated fats are high in calories, so keep your portion sizes small.

#### Limit "bad" fats

- Try to limit your saturated fats to 10-16 grams per day, based on your daily calorie needs.
- Avoid coconut oil, palm oil and hydrogenated fat.
- Limit fatty meats like hamburgers, hot dogs, salami, sausage, and whole milk, butter, ice cream and cheese.
- Avoid trans fats, found in stick margarines, snack foods, some baked goods and fast foods.

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## Activity level, weight & lifestyle changes

### Exercise and activity

Regular exercise at moderate to high levels helps to lower triglycerides.

Aim for 150-300 minutes of moderate activity each week, such as brisk walking or dancing. This is about 30-60 minutes each day. An activity tracker or pedometer can help measure how much you move.

Muscle strengthening at least twice a week, such as push-ups or lifting weights, is also good for you.



### Smoking

Smoking can also raise your triglycerides, lower "good" cholesterol, and is a major risk factor for heart attack and stroke. If you smoke, you should stop. Ask your health care provider for resources to help you quit, and visit [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov).



### Weight

Extra weight can lead to high triglycerides. Losing 5-10 percent of your body weight may lower your triglycerides by 20 percent. Eating less and moving more will help you lose weight.

### Alcohol

If you choose to drink, limit to no more than 1 drink per day for women and 2 drinks per day for men. Alcohol can raise triglycerides. If you have high triglycerides, you may be asked to limit or avoid alcohol completely.

#### Examples of one drink:

- 5 ounces of wine
- 12 ounces of beer
- 1½ ounces of alcohol

## Medicines

In addition to lifestyle changes, check with your provider for medicine to control your triglycerides and reduce your risk for heart attack or stroke.

- Take all medicines as directed.
- Be sure to talk about all of your prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, dietary supplements and any side effects you may have.
- Your provider will regularly check your cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

## Statins

- By prescription: atorvastatin, fluvastatin, lovastatin, pitavastatin, pravastatin, rosuvastatin and simvastatin.
- Lowers "bad" cholesterol, reduces risk of heart attack or stroke, may lower triglycerides.
- Be sure to report any new or unexplained general muscle aches or weakness.

## Omega-3 fatty acids

- Omega-3 fatty acids are sometimes called fish oil.
- Prescription medicine is preferred over—and is not the same as—dietary supplements. Supplements and vitamins are not considered medicines by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- Lowers triglycerides.
- If you have heart disease or diabetes with at least 2 other risk factors, a prescription omega-3 medicine called icosapent ethyl may be used, along with statins, to lower your risk of a heart attack or stroke.
- May cause upset stomach, increased gas, belching or a fishy taste.

## Fibrates

- By prescription: fenofibrate, gemfibrozil.
- Lowers triglycerides. Does not reduce your risk of a heart attack or stroke.
- Be certain to report any new or unexplained general muscle aches or weakness.

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