

High Triglycerides? Here's What You Can Do



Triglycerides are a main type of fat that is found in your body and in many of the foods that you eat. A high level of triglycerides in your blood (over 150) may increase your risk of heart disease—especially when you also have a high level of the bad cholesterol (LDL) or a low level of the good cholesterol (HDL). A high level of triglycerides in your blood may also increase your risk of pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas).

Triglyceride guidelines:

- Normal is less than 150 mg/dL.
- Borderline high is 150-198 mg/dL.
- High is 200 mg/dL or above.

What can cause high triglycerides?

High triglycerides can be caused by certain medical conditions (such as uncontrolled diabetes), some medications, or it can simply run in the family. Triglycerides can also be increased by diet and lifestyle choices, such as:

- obesity
- lack of exercise
- too many calories, especially from alcohol, fat, and foods high in sugar
- smoking



What can you do to lower your triglycerides?

- If you are overweight, try to lose weight. Losing as little as 10 pounds can help.
- Exercise regularly. Start with 10 minutes of daily activity, such as walking, bicycling, or swimming. Work up to at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days.
- Limit alcohol to 2 drinks a week. If your triglycerides are over 500, avoid alcohol.
- Limit sugars, including fat free baked goods. Limit fruit juice to 4-8 oz. per day.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugars under good control.
- Eat a low fat, high fiber diet. Whole grain foods, fruits, and vegetables provide fiber. Use small amounts of monounsaturated fats such as olive or canola oil, avocado, and nuts.
- Eat fish at least twice a week. Salmon, mackerel, herring, trout, water-packed albacore tuna, and water-packed sardines are good choices. Fish provides omega-3 fatty acids, which may lower triglycerides.
- When triglyceride levels are very high, dietary supplements providing omega-3 DHA and EPA fatty acids may lower them. Discuss with your medical professional.
- If you smoke, quitting is one of the best decisions you can make to improve your health.



Simple dietary changes can help lower triglycerides

To bring down your triglycerides, try replacing sweets and alcohol with these healthier substitutes.

Use less . . .	Use instead . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sugar-sweetened soft drinks, lemonade, and fruit drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• unsweetened fruit juice (limit to 4 to 8 oz. a day)• fresh or unsweetened fruit (1 to 2 pieces a day)• sugar-free or diet soft drinks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• cake, pie, doughnuts, pastries, ice cream, ice milk, sherbet, sorbet, sugar-sweetened gelatin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sugar-free gelatin or pudding
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• cereals with more than 5 grams of sucrose and other sugars per ounce• white breads, white rice, and pastas• candy, chocolate, sugar, honey, jam, or jelly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• complex carbohydrates, such as whole grain breads and cereals, brown rice, and whole wheat pasta
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• beer, wine, wine coolers, liquor, liqueurs, and cordials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sparkling water, mineral water, or club soda• non-alcoholic sparkling fruit juice

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What if these changes don't help you lower your triglycerides?

Sometimes, more changes to your diet and lifestyle are recommended. Your doctor may suggest that you work with other medical professionals (such as a registered dietitian or clinical health educator). If diet and lifestyle changes don't improve your triglycerides, medications may be prescribed.



This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other medical professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have further questions, please consult your doctor.