

# TRIGLYCERIDES:

## *What You Need to Know*



### What are Triglycerides?

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

### 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 nurse or doctor right away. This can be a life-threatening condition.

### What Increases Triglycerides?

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

#### Extremely High Triglycerides

If your triglycerides are 1,000 or more, you may have a rare inherited condition such as Familial Chylomicronemia Syndrome, also known as FCS.

### 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. If you have very high or extremely high triglycerides, you may need to keep your total fat intake very low or eat only certain kinds of fats. Talk with your nurse or doctor if you have questions about how much fat is okay for you.

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

#### Whole Grains & High-Fiber

- Eat 3 servings of fiber-rich foods each day: whole wheat bread, whole grains, beans.
- 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.
- At least 2 times per week, choose fatty fish like salmon, trout, albacore tuna or mackerel.
- 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.
- 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 30-60 minutes of activity each day. Exercise for at least 10 minutes at a time. Consider using an activity tracker or pedometer to measure how much you move. Gradually increase your activity level towards a goal of 10,000 steps each day.

### Smoking

Smoking can 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 nurse or doctor 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. To lose one pound per week, eat 200 fewer calories each day and increase your activity by 300 calories every day. Using a smaller plate can help you eat fewer calories.

### 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 serving:*

- 5 ounces of wine
- 12 ounces of beer
- 1.5 ounces of liquor



## Medicines to Lower Triglycerides

In addition to lifestyle changes, you may need medicine to control your triglycerides. Take all medicines as directed by your nurse or doctor. Be sure to talk about all of your prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements. Also talk about any side effects you may have. If you take any of the triglyceride lowering medicines, you will have a complete lipid panel blood test each year to check your cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

### Omega-3 Fatty Acids/Fish Oils

- Prescription medicine is preferred over dietary supplement.
- May cause upset stomach, increased gas or a fishy taste.
- Prescription omega-3 medicines and dietary supplements are not the same. Dietary supplements and vitamins are not considered medicines by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

### Fibrates

- By prescription: fenofibrate, gemfibrozil.
- Report any new or unexplained general muscle aches or soreness.

### Niacin

- Prescription medicine is preferred over dietary supplement.
- May have some side effects such as itching and flushing.

### Statins

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

### Extremely High Triglycerides

If you have extremely high triglycerides, as with FCS, usual treatments may not work. Find information and support at [LivingWithFCS.org](http://LivingWithFCS.org) or [FCSFocus.com](http://FCSFocus.com).