

# Learning About High Triglycerides



## **What are high triglycerides?**

Triglycerides are a type of fat in your blood. Your body uses them for energy. You need some for good health. But high triglyceride levels are linked with a higher risk of coronary artery disease. A high level may be a sign of metabolic syndrome. Very high levels raise your risk of pancreatitis.

## **What causes them?**

High triglycerides can run in families. They may also be caused by conditions such as obesity, diabetes, hypothyroidism, or kidney disease. You may have high triglycerides if you eat or drink too many foods or drinks with added sugar or if you drink a lot of alcohol. And some medicines can cause this condition.

## **What are their symptoms?**

High triglycerides usually don't cause symptoms. But if the condition is genetic, you may see fatty bumps under your skin.

## **How are they diagnosed?**

A blood test is used to measure triglycerides. It's most accurate if it's done after you go without food or drink for 8 to 12 hours (fasting).

Triglyceride levels are:

- Normal when they are less than 150 mg/dL.
- Moderately high when they are 150 to 499 mg/dL.
- Very high when they are 500 mg/dL or higher.

## **How are they treated?**

A healthy lifestyle can help lower your triglycerides and your risk of coronary artery disease. It includes losing weight, being active, limiting high-sugar foods and drinks, and limiting alcohol. Your doctor may recommend that you also take medicine. Your doctor will treat other health problems if they are causing high levels.

A healthy diet and lifestyle can help lower your triglyceride level and lower your risk of coronary artery disease.

- Lose weight, and stay at a healthy weight. Triglycerides are stored as fat in your tissues and muscles.
- Limit foods and drinks that have a lot of sugar. These include sugar-sweetened desserts, soda pop, and fruit juice.
- Limit saturated fats. These are found in animal-based foods like meat, butter, milk, and cheese. They are also found in coconut oil, palm oil, and cocoa butter.
- Choose a heart-healthy eating plan. Eat a diet that's rich in vegetables, whole grains, fish, lean meats, and low-fat or nonfat dairy foods. Eating oily fish may lower your levels. These fish include salmon, mackerel, lake trout, herring, and sardines.
- Limit or avoid alcohol. Limit alcohol to 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women. Alcohol has a strong effect on triglycerides.
- Be active on most days of the week. Before you start to be more active, check with your doctor to be sure it's safe. Try to do moderate activity at least 2½ hours a week. Or try to do vigorous activity at least 1¼ hours a week.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar in your target range.
- If you smoke, vape, or use other tobacco or nicotine products, try to quit. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about quit programs and medicines.
- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.