

Nutrition Guide

Dietary tips to lower triglycerides

Hypertriglyceridemia is a condition where the level of triglycerides in the blood is higher than normal. Elevated triglyceride levels are linked to an increased risk for heart disease, stroke and diabetes. It may also lead to the inflammation of the pancreas.

Triglycerides refer to the common form of fat found in foods and stored in the body. Triglycerides are carried in the bloodstream to tissues where they are used to produce energy.

If you have hypertriglyceridemia, making dietary changes can help you to lower your triglyceride levels:

- **Manage your weight**

Is your weight above the healthy range? Then your doctor has probably advised you to lose some weight. Weight loss has a positive effect on triglyceride levels, and you don't have to lose a lot of weight to see the benefits. Research has suggested that a weight loss of about 5-10% can result in a 20% decrease in triglycerides.

**See the fact sheet
Don't "weight" any longer
to learn more about
weight management**

- **Choose carbs carefully**

Excessive intake of refined carbohydrates (e.g. white rice, white bread) and foods high in added sugars (e.g. desserts, sweetened drinks) can increase triglycerides levels. Limit these foods in the diet; focus instead on consuming fibre-rich carbohydrate sources such as whole-grains (e.g. brown rice, wholemeal bread), fruits and vegetables.

- **Watch out for "bad" fats**

There are different types of fat in the food we eat. Fats which are considered to be "bad" are *trans* fat and saturated fat.

Trans fat is formed when vegetable oils undergo hydrogenation, an industrial process to harden oils for production of fats like shortening and hard margarine. Intake of *trans* fat should be kept as low as possible, as it raises both triglyceride and cholesterol levels. Common sources of *trans* fat include pastries, cakes and cookies. Products containing vegetable shortening and hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils may also have *trans* fat.

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A heart-healthy diet is also low in saturated fat. Foods which tend to be high in saturated fat are animal fats (e.g. fatty meat, skin of poultry, lard), full-fat dairy products (e.g. full cream milk, butter, ghee), dishes containing coconut milk, deep-fried foods and foods prepared with palm-based vegetable oil. Restrict your intake of saturated fat by making healthier dietary changes such as removing visible fat from meat, replacing coconut milk with low fat milk in cooking and choosing oils higher in unsaturated fat (e.g. sunflower, canola or olive oil).

- **Get your omega-3s**

Studies have shown that omega-3 fatty acids (DHA and EPA) derived from seafood is able to reduce triglyceride levels. Fish rich in omega-3 such as salmon, sardine and Spanish mackerel should be consumed regularly in your diet. For significant triglyceride lowering effect, you may require supplementation to obtain adequate amounts of omega-3 fatty acids – consult your doctor for guidance.



- **Alcohol advice**

Consuming too much alcohol can increase triglyceride levels in some people. If you drink, make sure you only do so in moderation (unless your doctor has told you to stop entirely). For individuals with very high triglyceride levels, complete avoidance of alcoholic beverages is recommended.

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