

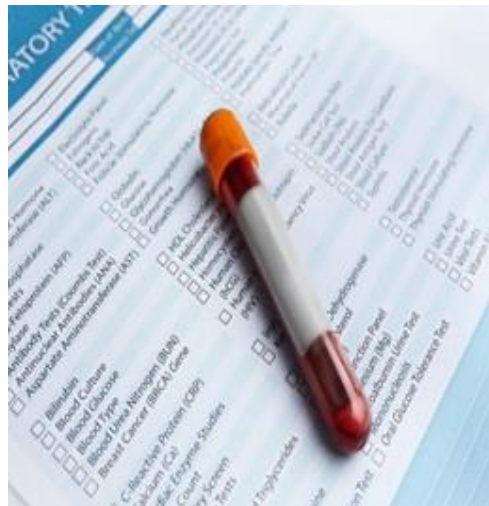
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Lower Your Triglycerides

By Debbie DeAngelo
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When we think about the fat in our diet translating to fat in our bloodstream, we often focus on cholesterol; however, there's another type of fat of equal importance. I'm talking about triglycerides.

Since triglycerides are normally lumped together with cholesterol and collectively referred to as lipids, we don't usually think of differentiating them. This is a mistake because high triglycerides are an independent risk factor for heart attack, stroke, metabolic syndrome (high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity combo), peripheral and carotid artery disease, and pancreatitis. In

addition to lifestyle choices, triglycerides can become elevated due to thyroid, liver, kidney or inflammatory diseases, medications such as corticosteroids, diuretics, and beta-blockers, and familial high lipid levels.

Five Step Plan

Adults should aim for a triglyceride level of less than 150 mg/dL. According to your lab results, borderline high is 150-199, high is 200-499, and very high is over 500. Since there aren't symptoms associated with elevated levels, you will need to obtain bloodwork to have your lipids checked periodically. Although the path to reducing cholesterol and triglycerides shares many similarities, there are a few dietary modifications that are very targeted to triglycerides—specifically minimizing sugar, alcohol, and refined starches. Here are five ways in which you can keep your level within normal limits or reduce it if necessary.

Sleuth out sugar. There's a strong correlation between a high sugar diet and high triglycerides. Assessing and reducing your added sugar intake is one of the first steps you should take to manage it. Follow the recommendation of the American Heart Association to limit added sugar to 24 grams (six teaspoons) per day in women and 36 grams (nine teaspoons) per day in men. Commonly consumed sources of added sugar include sweetened beverages, condiments, sauces, yogurt, cereals, and desserts.

Avoid alcohol. It may be as unappealing as cutting out sugar but avoiding or significantly reducing alcohol is impactful. It breaks down into sugar, which as we just stated, sends triglycerides soaring. Also, alcohol is frequently consumed alongside fattening foods. Double whammy.

Be selective about starch. Eating refined (non-whole grain) bread, rice, cereal, and pasta quickly metabolizes into sugar. Choose moderate serving sizes of whole grain-based versions of these foods. You don't need to avoid carbs; just choose the right ones in the right amounts.

Turn away trans-fats. Whether trying to control cholesterol or triglycerides, trans-fats aren't your friend. They are found in commercial baked goods, shortening, stick margarine, fried foods, snack foods and non-dairy coffee creamer. If the ingredient label lists hydrogenated vegetable oil, then it contains trans-fats.

Move it and lose it. It goes without saying (but I'll say it anyway) – maintaining a healthy weight and exercising will lower triglycerides. If overweight, dropping just 5-10% of your current weight will have a positive effect. And be sure to add plenty of movement and activity to your daily routine.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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