

Lowering Triglycerides

The most plentiful lipids in our body and diet are the triglycerides. At room temperature, triglycerides may be either solids (fats) or liquids (oils). They are the body's most highly concentrated form of chemical energy.

Although many factors contribute, people who eat a diet high in saturated fats run a greater risk of developing atherosclerosis [fatty plaque deposits forming in the walls of arteries] than do people who eat a diet lower in saturated fats and cholesterol.

Triglycerides can be in the saturated, monounsaturated or polyunsaturated form. Saturated fats mostly occur in animal tissues and a few plant products, such as cocoa butter, palm oil, and coconut oil. Monounsaturated fats are in olive oil and peanut oil. Oils that contain polyunsaturated fats are corn oil, safflower oil, sunflower oil, soybean oil, cottonseed and sesame oil.

To reduce dietary intake of saturated fats and cholesterol, eat less red meat such as beef, pork and lamb. Substitute fish, poultry or a vegetarian dish instead. To help lower triglycerides, and thus help lower your risk, make sure your diet provides no more than 30 percent of calories from fat, and that you eat no more than 300 mg. of cholesterol each day. When you eat fats of any kind, your liver will process them. If you eat more than your body needs for energy, your body will store the excess as body fat.

If you eat too many calories from any food -- carbohydrates, proteins, or fats -- your body will turn them into triglycerides to be circulated into the bloodstream for deposit in body fat stores.

Your blood triglyceride level will normally increase whenever you eat, plus different factors can affect your level, such as alcohol intake, certain medications, recent exercise, diet, place in your menstrual cycle and hormones.

High blood levels of triglycerides (as determined from fasting blood samples) are linked with heart disease, although it doesn't mean that you will develop heart disease. If you have other risk factors such as smoking, obesity and high blood pressure, your risk will increase.

Cutting down on fat-laden dairy products like whole milk, butter and cheese and increasing your intake of fresh fruits and vegetables would be helpful diet modifications. Substitute skim milk and fat free cheese, cottage cheese and yogurt. Eat lots of complex carbohydrates and fiber. These are known to help lower blood triglycerides. This includes foods such as whole grains like brown rice, whole wheat bread, whole wheat pasta, whole grain cereals like Shredded Wheat, All Bran, dried beans, fruits and vegetables of all types, but preferably fresh.

One of the best diet therapies for high triglycerides is seafood. Studies have shown that fish oils drive triglycerides down quite dramatically. Some of the seafoods shown to do this include clams, oysters, crab and salmon. Eat at least one or two Fish/seafood meals each week. Other good meals to include would be bean soups, whole grain pastas with low-fat sauces, fruit salads, vegetable salads, whole grain cereal for breakfast, whole grain bagels and fruits for snacks.

There are some foods you will want to avoid, as they contribute to high blood triglycerides: refined sugar, excessive alcohol, refined flours, and fruit juices.

Keep up the good work staying active. Exercise is extremely important, continue your walking and try snowshoeing or cross country skiing for variety.

If you smoke, STOP!

If you are over weight, try shedding a few pounds. Often, just lowering your weight can lower your triglycerides.