

Triglycerides

What are Triglycerides? Triglycerides are fats that are primarily made in your liver from carbohydrates when you eat more calories than you need. Some foods with fat in them may contain triglycerides but they play a much smaller role in increasing your triglyceride levels than excess carbohydrates in your diet.

Why do I want my triglycerides to be less than 150? Having high triglyceride levels increases your risk of strokes, heart attacks, and dementia. High triglycerides can make your blood pressure higher.

What can cause me to have high triglycerides? Medical conditions such as kidney and liver disease, pancreatitis, diets low in protein and high in carbohydrates, diets high in saturated fats and hypothyroidism, are linked with high levels of triglycerides.

Some people have genetic conditions that cause abnormally high triglyceride levels. Certain drugs such as thiazide diuretics, some beta blockers, hormones in birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy, tamoxifen, some new antipsychotics, cyclosporine and steroids (prednisone), can cause high levels of triglycerides.

When you eat, your body uses calories for immediate energy. Leftover calories are turned into triglycerides and stored in fat cells for later use. If you eat more calories than your body needs, your triglyceride level may be high.

When my triglycerides were checked I had not fasted first and my readings were above 150. Is that OK? In the past cholesterol testing has been done after not eating for 8 to 12 hours. This prevents foods that you have recently eaten from causing your readings to be higher than normal and makes it easier for your levels to be compared to what they were the last time. However, recent scientific studies have shown that high triglycerides at any time are bad for your health. So, fasting or not fasting, triglyceride levels over 150 are something you want to avoid having.

Are there foods or supplements that I can eat that will help my triglycerides go down? Eating foods high in Omega 3 Fatty Acids such as fish like salmon, mackerel, herring and sardines once or twice weekly may help. Fish often has mercury in it so it is best not to eat it more often than twice weekly. Fish Oil Capsules are a good alternative. Studies have shown that good quality fish oil capsules contain no mercury.

Eating a diet high in fiber from whole fruits and vegetables and whole grains can help reduce your triglycerides (25 – 35Gm/day of fiber). Using virgin olive oil instead of other oils can give slight improvements in triglycerides.

Are there foods that are more likely to make my triglycerides go up? Alcohol – more than 1 drink a day, sugars – especially high fructose corn syrup found in the ingredients of many foods (ketchup & salad dressings), processed grains like white flour, white rice (processing takes out the good fats and fiber), trans fats -otherwise known as hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, can all cause increases in your triglyceride levels. When you eat more food (calories) in a day than your body can use you can cause an increase in your triglycerides.