



## Triglycerides

When considering cholesterol, we often think of HDL “good” cholesterol and LDL “bad” cholesterol, but there is another form of fat that circulates in your blood that is equally important to address. When you consume calories, your digestive system makes triglycerides, which are an important source of energy for your body. Unused triglycerides are transported to fat cells to be stored.

### Why Are Triglycerides Harmful?

Elevated triglycerides are linked to cardiovascular disease, particularly heart disease, and can also put you at risk for pancreatitis. For most people, elevated triglycerides are caused by consuming too many calories, inadequate exercise, and being overweight or obese. Other factors include consuming too much alcohol, taking certain medications, or having conditions such as type 2 diabetes, kidney or liver disease, or certain genetic disorders.

### National Cholesterol Education Program guidelines for triglycerides:

|                 |                     |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Normal          | Less than 150 mg/dl |
| Borderline-high | 150 to 199 mg/dl    |
| High            | 200 to 499 mg/dl    |
| Very high       | 500 mg/dl or higher |

### You Can Lower Your Levels

While triglycerides are harmful, there is some good news. In most cases, changing your lifestyle can lower your triglyceride levels. The following changes are recommended:

- Reduce saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol in your diet.
- Reduce your intake of alcohol. Even small amounts of alcohol can increase triglyceride levels.
- Modify your diet. In addition to cutting down on calories, you should focus on consuming a plant-based diet that includes fruits, vegetables, beans, legumes and whole-grain, minimally processed breads, pasta, rice, and cereals. Choose healthier fats such as olive oil and fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, and minimize sugar and simple carbohydrates.
- Exercise five or more days per week for at least 30 minutes.
- Avoid smoking and control high blood pressure.

If lifestyle changes alone aren't enough to lower your triglycerides and your doctor recommends medication, it is still important to maintain a healthful diet.

Wellness