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# Healthy Eating Guidelines for People with High Triglycerides

Triglycerides are a type of fat found in your blood that is affected by what you eat and drink. If you have high triglycerides you may be at a greater risk of developing heart disease. Very high triglyceride levels can lead to pancreatitis.

This fact sheet provides tips on how to lower your triglyceride levels.



## Steps you can take

- **Aim for a healthy body size**

If you carry extra weight, especially around the middle, a weight loss of 5-10% has been shown to improve triglyceride levels.

- **Limit or avoid sugar and sweet foods**

- Limit foods high in sugar such as candies, chocolate bars, cookies, cake, pies, pastries, ice cream, frozen desserts and donuts.
- Reduce added sugars such as white, brown, icing or coconut sugar, molasses, honey, maple or corn syrup and agave nectar. Look for syrups, jellies and jams that are reduced in sugar and keep portions small.
- When baking, reduce the amount of sugar by at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  or replace some of the sugar with artificial sweetener.
- If buying canned fruit, choose fruit canned in water or juice instead of syrup.
- Drink water, low fat milk, tea or coffee without added sugar instead of sugary drinks such as pop or sodas, specialty coffees and teas, fruit juices, and beverages labelled as drinks, cocktails or punches.

- **Choose foods high in dietary fibre**

- Select whole grain bread, oats, quinoa, barley and brown rice more often than white or refined grain products.

- Choose legumes (beans, peas and lentils) more often. Add to soups, salads, casseroles or wraps.
- Enjoy a variety of vegetables and fruits every day.
- **Select sources of unsaturated fats, including omega-3 fats**
  - Use small amounts of unsaturated (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated) oils such as canola, corn, olive, peanut, safflower, soybean or sunflower for cooking and in salad dressings.
  - Enjoy plain, unsalted nuts like almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, peanuts, pecans, pistachios and walnuts. Nuts can be high in calories, so watch portion size. Aim for 60 mL (¼ cup) per serving.
  - Eat fish two times each week. Eating more may be better. Include fatty fish such as herring, mackerel, salmon, sardines or trout. Fish contains DHA and EPA omega-3 fats that can help lower your triglyceride levels.
  - Consider taking fish oil supplements (2-4 g/day) that are an excellent source of DHA and EPA omega-3 fats. If you are a vegetarian consider algae sourced omega-3 supplements. Talk to a registered dietitian or your doctor for more information.
  - Walnuts and flaxseeds contain a different type of omega-3 fat called ALA. It does not lower triglycerides. While walnuts and flaxseed are healthy food, they do not replace fish or fish oil supplements.
- **Select foods low in saturated fats**
  - Choose lean, well-trimmed cuts of meat such as beef, goat, lamb, pork, and skinless poultry. A portion is about a ¼ of a plate or a small chicken thigh.
  - Choose low fat milk and milk products like skim, 1% or 2% milk, low fat yogurt, cottage cheese and lower fat cheese with 20% or less milk fat (M.F.).
  - Use small amounts of vegetable oil or non-hydrogenated, soft margarine instead of butter, ghee, coconut and palm oil, shortening and hard margarine.
  - Use cooking methods that require no or little amounts of added fat such as baking, roasting, steaming and broiling.
- **Limit or avoid alcohol**

- Reduce alcohol intake to no more than 1-2 standard drinks per day. For some people, just one drink a day increases triglyceride levels.
- One standard drink is:
  - 341 mL (12 oz.) bottle of 5% beer, cider or cooler
  - 142 mL (5 oz.) glass of 12% wine
  - 43 mL (1.5 oz.) shot of 40% spirits.
- For mixed drinks choose water, vegetable juice, diet pop or soda water instead of sugary drinks like tonic water, cocktail mixes, regular pop, fruit drinks and juices.

### Other Tips:

- Use [Canada's Food Guide](#) to help plan a healthy diet.
- **Read and compare food labels** to find out which products are lower in saturated fat and sugar and higher in dietary fibre.
- **Be active**
  - Aim for at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) of physical activity each week.
  - Do activities you enjoy such as brisk walking, swimming, dancing, bicycling, skating or skiing.
  - See [Canada's Physical Activity Guide](#) for more information.

### Other Considerations

If you have diabetes, good control of your blood glucose (sugar) may help lower triglyceride levels. Talk to a registered dietitian about a meal plan for good blood glucose control.



## Additional Resources

- Learn about label reading: [www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/understanding-food-labels/percent-daily-value.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/understanding-food-labels/percent-daily-value.html)
- Learn how to measure your waist size: <http://www.heartandstroke.ca/get-healthy/healthy-weight/healthy-weight-and-waist>
- Increasing Your Omega-3 Fats: [www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMbrUAM=&PreviewHandout=bA==](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMbrUAM=&PreviewHandout=bA==)
- Healthy Snacks for Adults: [www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMfsUAQ=&PreviewHandout=bA==](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMfsUAQ=&PreviewHandout=bA==)

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