

Lower Your Triglycerides with Lifestyle

Triglycerides (TGs) are a type of fat in the bloodstream. They are used for energy. When TGs become too high, this biomarker suggests risk for cardiovascular disease, especially when accompanied by low HDL-cholesterol and high LDL-cholesterol. High triglycerides are a common problem in the United States. One third of adults have levels above the normal range (< 150 mg/dl).

The good news about TGs is that they are highly responsive to lifestyle modifications. Optimal lifestyle interventions can lower TGs by 20-50%. We suggest that you look at the following chart and select a change or changes you feel ready to make!

Note: When evaluating TG levels over time, be aware that there is considerable variability in the measurement of TG. Look at the trend in TG over time (not just one reading) to evaluate the success of your lifestyle changes. Remember, the same positive lifestyle changes that lower TG, also improve your overall health!

Effect of Lifestyle Changes on TG Lowering

LIFESTYLE FOCUS	DECREASES TG BY	TIPS FOR GETTING IT DONE
Lose 5%-10% body weight (if needed) Loss of excess weight is critical to reduce TG levels.	20% **for each kg loss, TG decrease by 1.9%	Calculate your personal 5-10% weight loss goal. Make a plan to lose a pound a week by decreasing daily caloric intake by 400 calories and increasing activity by 100 calories with a daily 30 minute walk of moderate intensity. Track your food intake with online apps, join a group support/food delivery/meal replacement program and/or visit a Registered Dietitian/Primary Care Physician/Healthcare Team to assist you with a personalized heart healthy weight loss plan.
Enjoy a Mediterranean style of eating; avoid very low fat eating styles.	10-15%	Focus on fresh less processed, whole foods. Eat more vegetables, beans, fruits (no juice), nuts, fish, and whole grains. Use liquid oil in place of butter and solid fats. Avoid refined grains like white bread and white rice as well as added sugars. **Avoid very low fat/high carbohydrate diets
Add marine derived omega-3 fatty acids (for each gram or 1000 mg DHA plus EPA) in the form of oily fish or supplements.	5-10%	Enjoy oily fish such as salmon, trout, sardines and herring often (12 oz of cooked salmon per week is equivalent to 1 gram of fish oil). While fish oil supplements are available, they have variable quantities of EPA and DHA, and the FDA has indicated that they are not to be used for treatment of elevated TGs. Discuss prescription omega-3 medications with your healthcare provider if you need substantial TG lowering.
Moderate intensity exercise of at least 150 minutes per week.	20-30%	Get out that pedometer and start walking, an excellent moderate intensity activity. Other activities can include ballroom dancing, gardening, biking and tennis. You can even do small bouts of activity that add up! Go to www.health.gov/paguidelines for more information. Find something you love to do and "just do it"!
Avoid trans fat /lower saturated fat.	For each gram less trans fat, TG decrease by 1%	Read the ingredient list on food products and avoid all that contain "partially hydrogenated oil." This includes any kind of oil that has been partially hydrogenated. Also limit saturated fat to <5-6% of calories (find your personal limit at www.heart.org/facethefats and go to "My Fats Translator."
Focus on whole grains; limit refined carbohydrates, added sugars (which excludes milk and fruit sugar) as well as a diet high in fructose (>100 grams per day).		Make most of your grains whole. Look for 100% whole wheat bread, cereal and pasta. Limit added sugars to less than 25 grams daily for women and 37 grams daily for men or less than 10% of total calories. Recent studies have shown that fructose may raise TG more than other sugars. High fructose foods include regular soda, agave, honey and raisins.. Low fructose fruits include strawberries, bananas, peaches and cantaloupe.
Limit alcohol; complete abstinence recommended if TG are >500 mg /dl.		If you drink, limit alcohol to one serving daily for women and two for men (one serving is 12 oz beer, 5 oz wine or 1.5 oz hard liquor.)
Note: If TG are greater than 500 mg/dl, a low fat (15% of calories) eating plan is recommended to reduce the incidence of pancreatitis.		Speak to a Registered Dietitian or Health Care Provider to personalize a low "total fat" lifestyle plan for you.

** TG >1000 mg/dl are associated with increased risk of pancreatitis. Consult your physician for treatment.

References:

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