

## UW HEALTH - ONLINE HEALTH FACT

### Eating Guidelines to Lower Triglycerides

Triglycerides are a type of fat. They come into your blood:

- Through the fat in the foods you eat.
- From the extra calories and carbohydrates in your meals that your body converts to triglycerides.
- When they are released from the fat already stored in your body.

High levels in your blood can increase the chance that you will have heart disease. Triglycerides do not build up in the arteries like the bad cholesterol (LDL) does. Instead, high levels can cause LDL cholesterol to convert into a more harmful form that damages the arteries and speeds up the build up of blockage. High triglycerides can also get in the way of forming good cholesterol (HDL). If triglycerides are very high, pancreatitis can develop.

**Normal triglycerides should be: 150 mg/dl or less**

High levels may be caused by:

- Being overweight
- Eating too much fat
- Eating too many carbohydrate foods (includes sugar and starches)
- Drinking alcohol on a daily basis
- Having diabetes or kidney disease
- Genetics
- Some medicines

#### **To Lower Levels:**

**Lose some weight by eating fewer calories and exercising.** The fat tissue in your body serves as a source of triglycerides. The less fat you have, the harder it is for your body to release it into the blood. Triglycerides will be reduced by even a small weight loss (10 pounds).

**Include some fat in your diet.** About 25-30% of your calories should come from fat. (See the fat intake table for details.) If you restrict your fat intake to less than this you will increase your carbohydrate intake. Doing this could increase blood triglycerides.

- Monounsaturated fats (olive and canola oils, olives, nuts and avocados) should be the primary fat source.
- To lower your total fat intake, control your use of fatty meats, high-fat dairy products, fried foods, and high-fat desserts.

- Be careful when you choose reduced-fat or fat-free products since they may have more sugar and calories than the normal kind.

**Limit your use of foods high in sugar.** Some of the sugar you eat becomes triglycerides in your body. Regular soda, sweetened drinks (Kool-Aid<sup>®</sup>, lemonade, Hi-C<sup>®</sup>), and fruit juice (even if unsweetened) are often a major source of sugar since 12 ounces of any of these will provide at least 10 teaspoons of sugar. Small amounts (1-2 Tablespoons) of a table sugar, syrup, or jelly will most likely not affect triglycerides, unless they are used more than a few times per day. If you eat desserts like cake or cookies, limit them to one serving per day in order to reduce your intake of sugar and calories.

**Limit amount of starchy foods in your diet.** Starchy foods like bread, potatoes, pasta, cereal, rice, and noodles are broken into sugars by your body. These sugars can become triglycerides if eaten in large amounts. The right amount of starchy foods will vary with each person and how active they are. For most people, the number of servings of starchy foods should be 2-4 per meal. (See the table on the next page to see what makes up a serving of starch.)

**Eat smaller more frequent meals throughout the day.** It is common for many people to consume 1 or 2 large meals a day. Large meals in most cases mean triglycerides will remain higher, longer than if smaller meals are consumed. Eat at least 3 middle-sized meals a day.

**Use alcohol in small amounts or not at all.** Alcohol provides extra calories that make weight loss harder. It promotes the body into making more triglycerides. Besides raising triglycerides, it can also increase blood pressure.

**Exercise!** Exercise helps the muscles use triglycerides for energy. So the more you exercise, the more your levels will drop.

#### **Recommended Fat Intake Based on Calorie Level**

<b>Calorie Level</b>	<b>30% of calories as fat</b>	<b>25% of calories as fat</b>
1500 calories	50 grams	42 grams
1800 calories	60 grams	50 grams
2000 calories	67 grams	55 grams
2200 calories	73 grams	61 grams
2500 calories	83 grams	69 grams

## **Examples of a serving of Starchy Foods**

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1 slice of bread  
1/3 cup of cooked rice  
½ of a hamburger, hot dog bun, English muffin, or bagel  
½ cup of cooked pasta or noodles  
¼ cup sweet potato or baked beans  
½ cup of mashed potato, peas, winter squash, or corn  
1 oz dry cereal  
½ cup cooked cereal  
6 soda crackers

A good goal for the intake of starchy foods is 6-11 servings per day. A smaller number of servings is needed for people eating 1500 calories per day. A larger number for people eating 2200-2500 calories per day.

Instead of filling up on starchy foods, make sure your meals contain plenty of vegetables and enough protein. Most vegetables are low in carbohydrate and calories, and high in fiber. Besides being a very good source of vitamins, minerals, and other healthy nutrients, they can fill up your stomach and your plate!

### **Include Protein Foods in Your Meals**

Meals that contain some protein, along with carbohydrates and a little fat, are often more filling. This can provide longer-lasting energy than meals that contain little or no protein.

#### **For example:**

A breakfast meal of two pieces of toast with jelly is nearly all carbohydrate. This meal in most cases is less filling than one that includes one piece of toast and a carton of yogurt, even though the calories are about the same.

The second meal is richer in protein. This means that your body will digest and use the food more slowly. Your body will provide you with energy for a longer time. When energy is released slowly into the blood stream, the body handles it better and is less likely to produce excess triglycerides. Food that is slowly absorbed also helps control your hunger. If your hunger is under control you are more likely to avoid high calorie snacks. Decreased hunger should also help you to eat smaller meals.

### **Lower-fat protein foods**

Skim milk	Fish-baked or broiled cod, haddock, perch
Low-fat or fat-free yogurt	Tuna packed in water
Low-fat or fat-free cottage cheese	Imitation crab legs
Part skim milk cheese	Turkey or chicken
Low-fat or fat-free cream cheese	Soy milk or soy protein powder
Lean ham, pork tenderloin, round steak	Tofu

**Higher in unsaturated fat, but low in saturated fat**

Peanut butter

Nuts

Herring or sardines

Salmon, tuna steak, swordfish

Hummus (garbanzo bean spread)

Soy nuts

Sunflower seeds

High blood triglycerides may increase your risk for heart disease. The good news is that in most cases they respond quickly to changes in eating and exercise. If your levels are high, start by cutting out the extra fats and sugars in your diet. You can work toward slow weight loss (about 1 pound per week) through exercise and smaller servings of food. Sometimes medicines that lower triglycerides are also needed. Eating and exercise changes will make these medicines work better.

If you have more questions please call UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below.

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2880 University Avenue  
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(608) 263-5012

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