Triglycerides – Optimize The Most Important Biomarker That Most Doctors Ignore

Hey, just wanted to let you know that your triglycerides are probably a bit high. Three out of every ten people in the United States have above normal triglyceride levels.

This sounds like the beginning of a drug commercial, but don't worry – this problem has a simple and natural solution.

However, before we find the solution, we must properly identify the problem.

The Problem With High Triglyceride Levels

In the shadow of our cholesterol numbers are our – often overlooked – triglyceride levels. Your doctor may tell you that "your triglycerides are a little high," but what does this really mean? Does it really matter?

Must Read: *How to Detoxify and Heal the Lymphatic System*

First, let's clear up what having "high triglycerides" actually means. According to the American Heart Association, here is how our triglyceride levels are categorized:

Optimal	Less than 100 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL)
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 won't experience any symptoms if you have borderline-high or high triglycerides, which is why many doctors will just

shrug it off. However, it is important to know that triglyceride levels that are even just “a little high” are associated with:

Heart Disease

Studies suggest that high triglyceride levels impair cholesterol levels, increasing the amount of atherogenic (plaque forming) cholesterol particles in the blood.

Obesity

Obesity and high triglyceride levels are intimately linked. One study found that approximately 80% of people who are obese or overweight had triglyceride levels ≥150 mg/dL.

Metabolic Syndrome

The prevalence of triglyceride levels ≥150 mg/dL is nearly twice as high in people who have metabolic syndrome. Metabolic syndrome is a condition that is commonly diagnosed when the person has high blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess body fat around the waist, and abnormal cholesterol levels.

Excess Visceral Fat (fat around the organs)

Excess body fat is associated with elevated triglyceride levels, but visceral fat is a greater contributor than subcutaneous fat (fat that is found under the skin rather than near vital organs).

Type 2 Diabetes

Around 35% of people with type 2 diabetes have high fasting triglyceride levels. This suggests that blood sugar and triglyceride levels are intimately linked (more on that later).

Hypothyroidism

When the levels of thyroid hormone are low, cholesterol and triglycerides stay in the blood for a longer period of time, which increases the likelihood of heart disease and fatty plaque build-up in the arteries.

Kidney Disease

Triglyceride levels of >200 mg/dL are present in about half of those with chronic kidney disease, which is commonly caused by diabetes and high blood pressure.

All of this seems worrisome at first – especially if you have high triglycerides – but there is some good news. Actually, it's great news.

Knowing what conditions high triglyceride levels are associated with provides us with important clues. Clues that give us a clearer picture of what causes high triglyceride levels and how to optimize them. First, let's figure out what they are.

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What Are Triglycerides?

Triglycerides are the most potent fuel source that is stored in your body. They are so energy-dense that stored that these molecules can keep the body running for about a month.

Where exactly are triglycerides stored in your body? Well, you already know. You just call it "fat" instead of "stored triglycerides."

Yes, that's right – triglycerides are those things that are being stored in your fat cells. While we are fasting, restricting carbohydrates, or limiting calories, these

triglycerides are liberated from our fat cells to provide us with energy. This process is what helps us lose fat and reduce our triglyceride levels. However, one big problem arises if we live in westernized societies – there is an overabundance of processed food at all times.

Why Do You Have High Triglycerides?

If you are reading this right now, you probably live in an area where many different varieties of food are always available. In this abundant food environment, it is easy for our emotional and instinctual desires to override all logical sense, so most of us end up eating more calories and sugar than we actually need.

In response to the massive influx in calories, the cells become stuffed with so much energy that they reject the signal to take in more energy that they receive from insulin (an energy storage hormone that is stimulated the most by carbohydrate consumption). This is otherwise known as insulin resistance, and it causes a cascade of hormonal changes that increase blood sugar and triglyceride levels. On top of that, sugar consumption (especially the consumption of fructose) stimulates the creation of fat in the liver.

What all of this means is that eating excess calories increases your triglyceride levels and eating too much sugar increases your triglyceride levels even more, especially if that sugar is mostly composed of fructose.

Hold on. What about the fat?

After all, we are talking about triglycerides – a type of fat. How could I talk about calories and sugar and neglect to mention fat as a contributor to high triglyceride levels as well? Well, there is a good reason for that.

Related: ***Start Eating Like That and Start Eating Like This – Your Guide to Homeostasis Through Diet***

Carbs Raise Triglycerides The Most

It would only make sense for dietary fat to increase triglycerides more than carbs, but the science shows us that just the opposite is true.

In one study, people with high triglycerides and normal triglycerides were put on a 15% fat, whole-food diet after eating a high-fat diet (35%). After only one meal of the low-fat diet, their triglyceride levels were elevated for higher and longer than during the high-fat diet.

By the end of the diet the low-fat group's fasting triglyceride concentrations increased by 60% and the production of atherogenic LDL cholesterol increased as well. This occurred in people with normal and high triglycerides in response to a whole-food based low-fat diet. (Imagine what would happen if the diet contained more simple sugars!)

So, What Is The Best Triglyceride Lowering Diet?

Let's start by comparing two ends of the dietary spectrum – Low-carb versus low-fat.

A recent meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials found significantly greater reductions in triglyceride levels on the low-carb diet. This meta-analysis of the literature confirms what we discovered above.

Eat more carbohydrates and less fat, and you'll increase your triglyceride levels. Eat fewer carbs and more fat, and the opposite will occur. In fact, researchers found that for every 5% decrease in total fat, triglyceride level was predicted to

increase by 6% and HDL cholesterol (the “good” cholesterol) to decrease by 2.2%. More specifically, for every 1% isoenergetic replacement with saturated fat, monounsaturated fat, and polyunsaturated fat, there was a reduction in triglycerides by 1.9 mg/dL, 1.7 mg/dL, and 2.3 mg/dL, respectively.

These findings suggest that replacing all carbohydrates with fat will get your triglycerides to optimal levels the quickest. However, when we look closer at the research, a different pattern emerges.

Which is Better? The Low-Carb Diet vs. The Mediterranean Diet

In a randomized controlled trial, the effects of a Mediterranean-style weight-loss diet were compared with a low-carbohydrate diet. After six months, triglyceride levels were reduced the most in the low-carb diet group. However, after 12 months, the Mediterranean-style diet showed similar reductions in triglycerides as the low carbohydrate diet.

These results show us that there may be a limit to how much restricting your carbohydrates can reduce triglycerides. So, instead of counting your carbs, it may be best to follow the eating principle that both the low-carbohydrate and Mediterranean diets follow: eliminate the crap and eat more whole foods.

Related: ***The Way We Used To Eat – The Real Paleo Diet***

The Most Important Crap to Eliminate to Optimize Your Triglycerides

Avoid these triglyceride train wrecks, to ensure optimal triglyceride levels:

1. Alcohol

Based on the data from many studies on alcohol consumption and triglycerides, it is estimated that the ingestion of 1 oz of alcohol per day corresponds to a 5% to 10% higher triglyceride concentration than found in nondrinkers. If you have high triglycerides or if you want to have flawless triglyceride levels, it is best to abstain from alcohol completely.

2. Trans Fats

Trans fatty acids are found in all partially and fully hydrogenated oils. They consistently cause significant increases in triglycerides and atherogenic LDL cholesterol levels, which increases cardiovascular disease risk dramatically. Stick to natural fats from nuts, olives, avocado, fish, meat, and dairy.

3. Added Sugar

Studies have found that each additional daily serving of sugar-sweetened beverages is associated with a 2.25 mg/dL increase in triglyceride levels, as well as increases in insulin resistance, LDL cholesterol, and systolic blood pressure and a decrease in HDL cholesterol. It is best to avoid sugar completely and most of your carbohydrates from vegetables, legumes, and nuts for best results.

Related: *Healthy Alternative Sugars and More*

The Takeaway – The Best Triglyceride Lowering Diet

By cutting out all processed foods and eating a whole food diet, you will naturally cut down on the carbs, calories, and sugars. This way of eating will lower your triglycerides and improve your health dramatically.

To get you started, follow these guidelines:

- Every meal should consist primarily of local, beyond organic, or bio-dynamic vegetables.
- “Garnish” each meal with high-quality fish, meat, eggs, or dairy.
- Order from U.S. Wellness Meats,White Oak Pastures, Polyface Farms , Vital Choice, and Udder Milk to get the healthiest animal products for you, the environment, and the animals.
- Have a handful of nuts, seeds, and/or berries with each meal.
- Don’t eat any sugar-sweetened beverages, added sugars, processed meat, refined grains, refined oils, hydregonated fats, and other highly processed foods.
- Limit your alcohol intake.
- Follow the suggestions for lowering triglycerides and cholesterol in this article.

However, even if you implement the triglyceride lowering diet flawlessly, you can only verify if it worked by getting a blood test.

How To Know If Your Triglyceride Levels Are Optimal

All you have to do is set up an appointment with your doctor to get a standard blood lipid panel test done. Ask your doctor to print the results for you, and track your progress at after appointment.

Where do you fall in these categories?

Optimal	Less than 100 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL)
Normal	Less than 150 mg/dL
Borderline-high	150 to 199 mg/dL
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Very high	500 mg/dL or higher

Aim for optimal triglyceride levels, but don't forget about cholesterol and blood sugar levels as well.

To see if you have healthier cholesterol levels, check your total-to-HDL cholesterol ratio. A ratio between 3 and 4 indicates that you have healthy cholesterol levels. Your fasting blood sugar levels should be below 100 mg/dl for optimal health.

It is also important to take note of your posture before you get your blood drawn. For example, different positions, like sitting, standing, and laying down, can cause triglycerides to vary significantly. Because of this, the American Heart Association recommends that you sit for at least 5 minutes in the same position each time you get your blood drawn to minimize variability in triglyceride measurements.

After you implement our suggestions, please comment with your results to inspire others to take their health into their own hands.

Recommended Reading:

- *13 Scientifically-Proven Ways to Optimize Your Triglyceride and Cholesterol Levels Naturally*
- *Triglycerides in Junk Food are the Chemical Equivalent of 'Hard Drugs' for the Brain*
- *Lower Cholesterol and Prevent Heart Disease Without Drugs*
- *80% Raw Food Diet*
- *Agave Nectar – Is it Healthy?*

Sources:

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- *Effect of 6-month adherence to a very low carbohydrate diet program* – Science Direct

- *A Low-Carbohydrate, Ketogenic Diet versus a Low-Fat Diet To Treat Obesity and Hyperlipidemia: A Randomized, Controlled Trial* – Annals of Internal Medicine
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- *Lower Cholesterol and Prevent Heart Disease Without Drugs* – Organic Lifestyle Magazine
- *Triglycerides and Cardiovascular Disease: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association* – Circulation
- *Effects of a low-fat, high-carbohydrate diet on VLDL-triglyceride assembly, production, and clearance* – NCBI
- *Modification of low density lipoprotein by endothelial cells involves lipid peroxidation and degradation of low density lipoprotein phospholipids* – NCBI
- *The Total-to-HDL Cholesterol Ratio – What Does It Mean?* – Chris Masterjohn PhD
- *Effects of Thyroid Dysfunction on Lipid Profile*– NCBI
- *Cholesterol metabolism* – University of Waterloo
- *The Central Role of Thyroid Hormone in Governing LDL Receptor Activity and the Risk of Heart Disease* – Chris Masterjohn PhD
- *Dietary Guidelines to Treat and Prevent Atherosclerosis* – PCRM
- *13 Simple Ways to Lower Your Triglycerides* – Healthline
- *Plasma Triglyceride Level is a Risk Factor for Cardiovascular Disease Independent of High-Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol Level: A Metaanalysis of Population-Based Prospective Studies* – Sage Journals
- *Fish oil – how does it reduce plasma triglycerides?* – NCBI
- *Mediterranean Diet 101: A Meal Plan and Beginner's Guide* – Healthline
- *Changes in Serum TSH and Free T4 during Human Sleep Restriction* – NCBI
- *Mechanism of Action of Niacin* – NCBI
- *Overfeeding with medium-chain triglyceride diet results in diminished deposition of fat.* – The American Journal

of Clinical Nutrition
- *Medium Chain Triglyceride Oil Consumption as Part of a Weight Loss Diet Does Not Lead to an Adverse Metabolic Profile When Compared to Olive Oil* – NCBI
- *Association of nut consumption with total and cause-specific mortality.* – NCBI