

What causes high triglycerides? Which foods will lower them?

Triglycerides (TGs) are a very common chemical form of fat and are found in plant foods, animal foods, and in our bodies as well. "High triglycerides" is a term that refers to elevation of this form of fat form in our bloodstream. A more technical term for high triglycerides is hypertriglyceridemia.

There are many different causes of high triglycerides, but diet alone does not seem to be one of them. The reason is simple: our bodies depend on eating to keep our blood triglycerides at a healthy level. After a meal, over 90% of the TGs in our bloodstream are supposed to come from food. However, when we practice poor eating habits and develop health problems along the way, these health problems, together with our low-quality diet, are enough to make our blood TG levels excessive. Obesity, insulin resistance, excessive intake of alcohol, poorly controlled type 2 diabetes, hypothyroid disease, and kidney disease all place us at risk of high triglycerides-especially when accompanied by a low-quality diet. Other factors that can increase our risk include medication use, insufficient exercise, and a growing list of genetic problems that prevent our metabolism from effectively handling TGs.

When coupled with lifestyle changes that address some of the larger health problems described above, dietary changes can lower high triglycerides by as much as 20%. These dietary changes include:

- reduction of calories, if excessive
- reduction of total fat, if excessive
- reduction of saturated fat if excessive, and replacement of some saturated fats with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats
- increase of omega-3 fatty acid intake to 4 grams daily
- reduced alcohol intake, if excessive
- weight loss diet, if weight loss is needed

While there is not much scientific research linking individual foods to reduction of high triglycerides, the dietary guidelines above point to some pretty clear food recommendations. You're going to want plant fats rather than animal fats if you want to replace saturated fat with unsaturated fat. That means less red meat, less dark meat chicken or turkey, less butter and cream, and more nuts, seeds, and olive oil. To keep total calories and total fat levels healthy, however, you'll still need to stick with moderate portions of these healthier plant fats. With respect to omega-3 fats, you'll have to focus on specific foods. Wild-caught, cold-water fish like salmon (4 grams per 8 ounces of cooked fish), cod or halibut (1.25 grams per 8 ounces), flaxseeds (3.5 grams per 2 tablespoons), and walnuts (2.25 grams per quarter cup) are some excellent choices here.

Our [Healthiest Way of Eating Plan](#) is a great way to lower excess calories, excess fat, bring your saturated fat intake down and your omega-3 fat intake up.

References

- van Oostrom AJ, Real JT, Carmena R, et al. Daylong triglyceridaemia in healthy Mediterranean and northern European subjects. *Neth J Med.* 2004 Sep;62(8):279-85. 2004.
- Yuan G, Al-Shali KZ, Hegele RA. Hypertriglyceridemia: its etiology, effects and treatment. *Can. Med. Assoc. J.,* Apr 2007; 176: 1113 - 1120. 2007.

Reference website:

http://whfoods.org/genpage.php?tname=newtip&dbid=14&utm_source=daily_click&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily_email