

Learning about Triglycerides: After Your Visit

What are triglycerides?

Triglycerides are a type of fat found in the blood. Your body uses triglycerides for energy. A blood test that measures your cholesterol also measures your triglycerides.

What should my child's triglycerides level be?

A triglyceride level less than 130 is best for children. Triglyceride levels higher than 130 can increase your child's risk of heart disease.

What causes high triglyceride levels?

Triglyceride levels can be high for the following reasons:

- Being overweight
- Family history
- Lack of exercise
- Eating too many calories (especially from fats and sugars)
- Uncontrolled medical conditions (diabetes)
- Some medications (oral estrogens, steroids, skin medications, and some mental health medications)
- Smoking
- Drinking alcohol

How can children maintain a healthy triglyceride level?

1. Nutrition tips

- **Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day.** Snack on fruits and vegetables. At meals fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables.
- **Eat whole grains:** whole grain breads, oatmeal, bran cereals, brown rice and beans. Look for "whole grain" as first ingredient.
- **Avoid using the salt shaker.** Limit high salt foods like hot dogs or lunch meats.
- **Skip fried foods and fatty foods.**
- **Eat fish** twice a week. Most fish have a special kind of fat that promotes heart health. For help choosing healthy, low-mercury fish, visit www.epa.gov/waterscience/fish/advice.
- Consider using fish oil supplements- 1000mg of omega 3 from a combination of EPA and DHA per day.
- **Avoid sugary drinks.** Pop, fruit drinks, juice and sports drinks are high in sugar. Drink water and non-fat milk. Or try sparkling water with a slice of orange or lemon.
- **Be smart about fast food.**
 - Order food without cheese, sour cream, or mayonnaise (catsup and mustard are okay).
 - Don't supersize!
 - Skip the soda. Order non-fat milk or water.
 - Order the sandwich and hold the fries. Try a side salad instead.

2. Activity tips

Find ways to get at least 60 minutes of activity every day.

- Bicycling, hiking, running, swimming, roller blading, sports and dancing are great ways to increase your fitness, mood and academic performance.
- Join a sports team at school or a community center.
- Find friends or family to be active with.
- Improve the environment- walk, bike or use transit rather than drive.
- Improve your mood by spending more time outside and less time in front of a screen

3. Don't use tobacco

- Tobacco increases your risk of heart and lung disease.
- The Colorado Quitline has free counseling to help teens kick the habit. Call 1-800-784-8669.

Lifestyle changes that can help to lower risk of cardiovascular disease:

Instead of this ...	Choose this...
Sedentary activity/screen time	1 hour physical activity/day (walking/biking/swimming)
Sweetened beverages (soda, juice, lemonade)	Water flavored with lemon or skim milk
Cakes, pies, donuts, cookies, pastries	Whole grain/high fiber breads/cereals, fruits/vegetables
Butter, stick margarine, shortening, lard, coconut oil, palm kernel oil, and cottonseed oil	Olive oil, avocado, nuts/seeds, soy oil, ground flaxseed, and soft or liquid margarines
Fatty cuts of meat, sausage, bacon, hotdogs, fried foods, and most cold cuts (bologna, salami)	Lean beef/pork, chicken/turkey without the skin, fish high in omega 3 fats (salmon/sardines), reduced fat cheeses, tofu, and beans/lentils

Where can I find more information?

Go to kphealthyme.com, heart.org, activitytree.com, or choosemyplate.gov for more information.