

## 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](http://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](http://kphealthyme.com), [heart.org](http://heart.org), [activitytree.com](http://activitytree.com), or [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov) for more information.