



Patient Education

## Triglycerides and your health

Your triglyceride level is high.

Your level is: \_\_\_\_\_ mmol/L

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Target level is less than 1.7 mmol/L.**

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## Triglycerides

### What are triglycerides?

Triglycerides are a type of fat. They are found in your blood and in the cells of your body.

You need a certain level of triglycerides in your blood to use as a source of energy.

Having high levels of triglycerides in your blood increases your risk for pancreatitis and heart disease.

### What is pancreatitis?

Pancreatitis is an inflammation of the pancreas. This can lead to tissue damage and infection of the pancreas. Pancreatitis can also damage the heart, lungs and kidneys. High triglyceride levels can cause pancreatitis.

You are at risk for pancreatitis when your triglyceride level is over 10 mmol/L.

### What is heart disease?

Examples of heart disease include coronary artery disease, heart failure and arrhythmias.

You are at an increased risk for heart disease when your triglyceride level is over 2.2 mmol/L.

### What causes high triglycerides?

Common causes of high triglycerides include:

- eating too many calories, especially foods high in sugars and sweets
  - alcohol intake
  - increased body fat especially around your waistline
  - poorly controlled diabetes
  - kidney failure
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## **What can I do to reduce my triglyceride levels?**

- ✓ Limit foods high in sugar and sweets
- ✓ Eat several small meals throughout the day instead of 1 or 2 meals a day
- ✓ Limit or do not drink alcohol
- ✓ Reach and maintain a healthy weight
- ✓ Include exercise
- ✓ If you have diabetes, maintain ideal blood sugar levels

## **Sugar and sweets**

### **What sweet foods can I eat?**

- ✓ Sugar substitutes and sweeteners
- ✓ Diet syrups, jams, jellies and pudding
- ✓ Diet soda pop or soda water
- ✓ Plain cookies (social teas, arrowroots)

### **What sweet foods should I eat less often?**

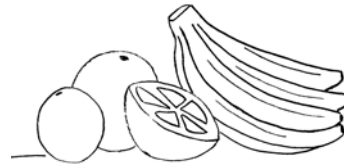
- White and brown sugar
  - Syrup and honey
  - Regular jams, jellies, Jello® and pudding
  - Regular soda pop
  - Other sweetened drinks (Kool-Aid®, fruit drinks, lemonade, sweetened fruit juices)
  - Cakes, pastries and pies
  - Frozen desserts such as ice cream, frozen yogurt and sherbet
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## Can I eat fruit?

Yes, you can eat fruit. But since fruit is high in sugar, aim for only 3 servings each day.

Examples of **1 fruit serving**:

- ½ banana or ½ grapefruit
- small orange, pear or apple
- ½ cup (125 ml) fruit juice, unsweetened
- ½ cup (125 ml) frozen or canned fruit, unsweetened or no sugar added



## Alcohol

### How much alcohol can I drink?

Alcohol can increase triglycerides. Have only 0 to 2 drinks each day. Do not drink any alcohol if your triglyceride level is more than 10 mmol/L.

### What is 1 drink of alcohol?

1 drink = 1½ oz (45 ml) liquor  
5 oz (175 ml) dry wine  
12 oz (340 ml) beer



### When you mix drinks, use:

- water
- vegetable juice (no more than 8 oz or 250 ml)
- diet soda pop
- soda water

### Choose less often:

- tonic water
- cocktail mixes
- regular soda pop
- fruit juices

## Exercise

Aim to exercise for about 30 minutes 4 to 5 times a week. Some examples of exercise are brisk walking, cycling or swimming. This can help with weight loss and controlling blood sugars. Talk to your doctor before starting any new exercise activity.



## Medications

You may need to take medications if changing your diet is not enough to lower your triglyceride levels.

If you need medication, following a heart healthy diet and getting regular exercise is still important in lowering triglyceride levels.

## Notes

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