

Diabetes and Triglycerides



ALASKA NATIVE
TRIBAL HEALTH
CONSORTIUM

What are triglycerides?

Triglycerides are a form of fat.

If you have diabetes, your provider will likely want to measure the amount of triglycerides that is in your blood. A high triglyceride level combined with low HDL cholesterol or high LDL cholesterol is associated with atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis is the buildup of fatty deposits in artery walls that increases the risk for heart attack and stroke.

Where do triglycerides come from?

When you eat, your body turns any calories it doesn't use into triglycerides. Cutting back on sugary foods, refined grains, unhealthy fats and alcohol can help decrease your triglyceride levels.

How are triglyceride levels tested?

Triglycerides are measured using a fasting blood test. This means you should not have had anything to eat for at least 8 hours. A person with diabetes should have their triglycerides measured at least once a year.

What should my triglycerides be?

The goal for healthy triglycerides for a person with diabetes is less than 150 mg/dL.

What if my triglycerides get very high?

High triglycerides are a risk factor for acute pancreatitis. This is a condition where the pancreas becomes very inflamed. Pancreatitis can damage the tissues and blood vessels of the pancreas. The pancreas is an organ responsible for many important functions such as the digestion of food and the production of insulin.

What can I do to lower my triglycerides if they are too high?

Here are some lifestyle changes that can help lower triglycerides:

- **Increase physical activity.**
Aim for 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise on most days of the week.

- **Lose weight.**
If you are overweight, losing 5-10% of your body weight will help decrease your triglycerides.
- **Decrease sugars and processed carbohydrate foods.**
Cut back on sweet drinks and sugary foods. Reduce your portions of processed carbohydrate foods such as white rice and noodles.
- **Choose fats wisely.**
Limit unhealthy fats like fatty meat, butter, Crisco, and the type of fat found in processed foods. Choose healthy fats such as olive oil, seal oil, and muktuk.
- **Eat more fish.**
Omega-3 fatty acids are found in all types of fish, but are more abundant in fatty fish like salmon, sardines, and herring.
- **Limit alcohol.**
According to the American Heart Association (AHA), small amounts of alcohol can increase triglyceride levels.
- **Medication and supplements:** You may be prescribed medication or fish oil supplements to help lower your triglycerides.



More Information

For more information or if you have questions, contact:

Diabetes Educator: _____

Phone: _____



Diabetes Program

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