

Top Ten Things To Know Triglycerides and Cardiovascular Disease

1. Triglycerides (or blood fats) are an important barometer of metabolic health; high levels may be associated with coronary heart disease, diabetes, and fatty liver.
2. According to NHANES data, Mexican-Americans have the highest rates of triglycerides (35.5%), followed by non-Hispanic whites (33.2%), and African-Americans (15.9%).
3. Non-fasting blood can now be used to screen for high triglyceride levels.
4. Normal fasting triglyceride levels are less than 150 mg/dL, and the authors suggest that new optimal levels should be less than 100 mg/dL.
5. People with high triglycerides (≥ 150 mg/dL) should limit their intake of fructose that is mainly found in soda and fruits, and instead emphasize a healthy diet including an increase in consumption of vegetables and low fructose fruits.
6. Simple sugars (high fructose syrup), saturated fats, and trans-fats raise triglyceride levels, whereas weight loss or use of unsaturated fats, especially those containing marine omega-3 fatty acids, lower triglyceride levels.
7. Consuming too many simple sugars, refined grains, and alcohol will increase triglyceride levels for those who have not been diagnosed with triglycerides outside normal range.
8. For everyone, adopting and maintaining healthy lifestyle measures (i.e. diet and physical activity) are very effective and can lower triglyceride levels by up to 50%.
9. Triglyceride elevations (levels above 1,000 mg/dL) are associated with acquired causes such as poorly controlled diabetes, medications such as steroids or estrogens, and/or poor diet with excess alcohol, and especially if there is an underlying genetic disorder of triglyceride metabolism.
10. It has not been determined whether lowering triglyceride levels beyond LDL cholesterol reduces the risk of heart disease and more research is needed to validate triglycerides as an independent risk factor for cardiovascular disease