

High Triglycerides:

What You Should Know

Hypertriglyceridemia, or high triglycerides is an elevation of fat in your bloodstream. If untreated, it can have very serious effects on your health. High triglycerides can be a result of genetic mutations, lifestyle factors, or a combination of both. It is important to address any lifestyle factors that may be contributing to your condition as a first step to treatment.

What causes high triglycerides?

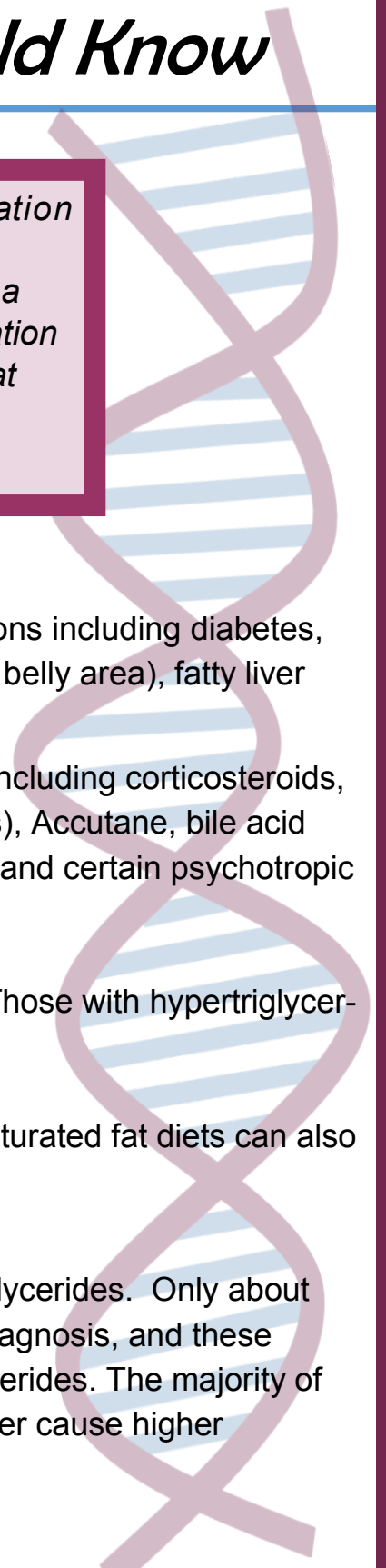
Elevated triglycerides are commonly seen in certain conditions including diabetes, obesity (especially when fat accumulates centrally, in the belly area), fatty liver disease, and kidney problems

Certain *medications* may also cause a rise in triglycerides including corticosteroids, estrogen, antihypertensive agents (such as beta-blockers), Accutane, bile acid sequestrants, certain chemotherapeutic agents, HAART, and certain psychotropic medications

Alcohol intake is highly associated with triglyceride levels. Those with hypertriglyceridemia should limit alcohol intake

Dietary factors such as intake of refined sugars and high saturated fat diets can also contribute to high triglyceride levels

Genetic mutations are often present in people with high triglycerides. Only about 5% of people have a single mutation explaining their diagnosis, and these mutations often cause very severe elevations in triglycerides. The majority of people have several, small-effect mutations that together cause higher triglycerides



What are the associated risks?

The risks associated with untreated high triglycerides vary depending on cause. In people with very high triglyceride levels caused by a single mutation, the main risk is developing pancreatitis, or inflammation of the pancreas. This is a serious disease that causes severe pain and difficulty breathing, and can lead to more serious complications such as organ failure. Pancreatitis is also a side effect of alcohol abuse.

In people with mild-to-moderate hypertriglyceridemia (caused by lifestyle factors and several genetic mutations), the main risk is cardiovascular disease. Many secondary causes of high triglycerides (diet, alcohol intake, diabetes, etc.) also carry other associated risks, and should be addressed immediately.

What Can I Do?

The first focus should be on correcting any *secondary factors* that may be contributing to your high triglycerides. Decrease alcohol intake, lose any excess weight, improve your diet, and be more physically active.

Omega-3 fatty acids have been shown to help lower triglyceride levels. Your doctor may recommend taking an omega-3 supplement. Omega-3s are also found in the diet in cold water fish such as salmon, herring, trout, tuna, and mackerel. Aim for at least 2 servings per week of these types of fish.

In some cases, your doctor may prescribe a *medication* to further lower your triglyceride levels. Commonly prescribed medications for treatment of high triglycerides include fibrates, statins, and high-dose niacin.

What is one drink?

5 oz (142 ml) wine
(12% alcohol)

12 oz (341 ml) beer,
cider, or cooler (5%
alcohol)

1.5 oz (43 ml) shot of
spirits (40% alcohol)

What are my lipid targets?

Normal	Less than 1.7 mmol/L
Mild to Moderate hypertriglyceridemia	2-10 mmol/L
Severe hypertriglyceridemia	More than 10 mmol/L

For more information and resources, visit www.lipidgeneticsclinic.ca