

**Q:** You've talked about high triglycerides being an important risk factor for heart disease—even more so than cholesterol.

What can I do to lower mine?

**A:** Yes, that's right. It's not all about cholesterol when it comes to heart disease. High triglycerides are an *independent* risk factor for coronary artery disease (atherosclerosis). Triglycerides are the stored fat in our bodies - both subcutaneous fat (under the skin—what you can pinch) and visceral fat which surrounds our organs. High triglycerides cause fatty liver, a condition that's become too prevalent in the United States due to poor diet, overweight and obesity. Too much circulating triglycerides in the blood stream makes it thicker—think milk shake—increasing the likelihood of cardiovascular events.



While triglyceride levels lower than 150 is desirable, lower than 100 is better and lower than 80 is optimal.

A diet high in sugars and other refined carbohydrates is a recipe for higher circulating triglycerides, as well as fatty liver. Regular, frequent and/or heavy use of alcohol is also known to raise triglycerides. High blood sugar associated with metabolic syndrome, prediabetes and type 2 diabetes increase triglycerides and very high triglycerides suppress HDL cholesterol—two important criteria in the diagnosis of metabolic syndrome.

Simple changes in diet and greatly reducing alcohol intake confer enormous benefits, even before any substantial weight loss. I've seen this countless times in my practice. In fact, I've seen triglyceride levels fall off a cliff after embarking on a very low carb diet. This occurs in as little as eight to twelve weeks! You can then knock that risk factor off the list.

To help their patients reduce triglyceride levels, some cardiologists advise taking Lovasa, an expensive fish oil prescription. However, you can get the same amount of EPA/DHA from a good quality [fish oil supplement](#) at much less cost.

To your health!

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