

celebrate heart health | BY RICH WALLACE | 

# how to put your blood on a diet **taming triglycerides**

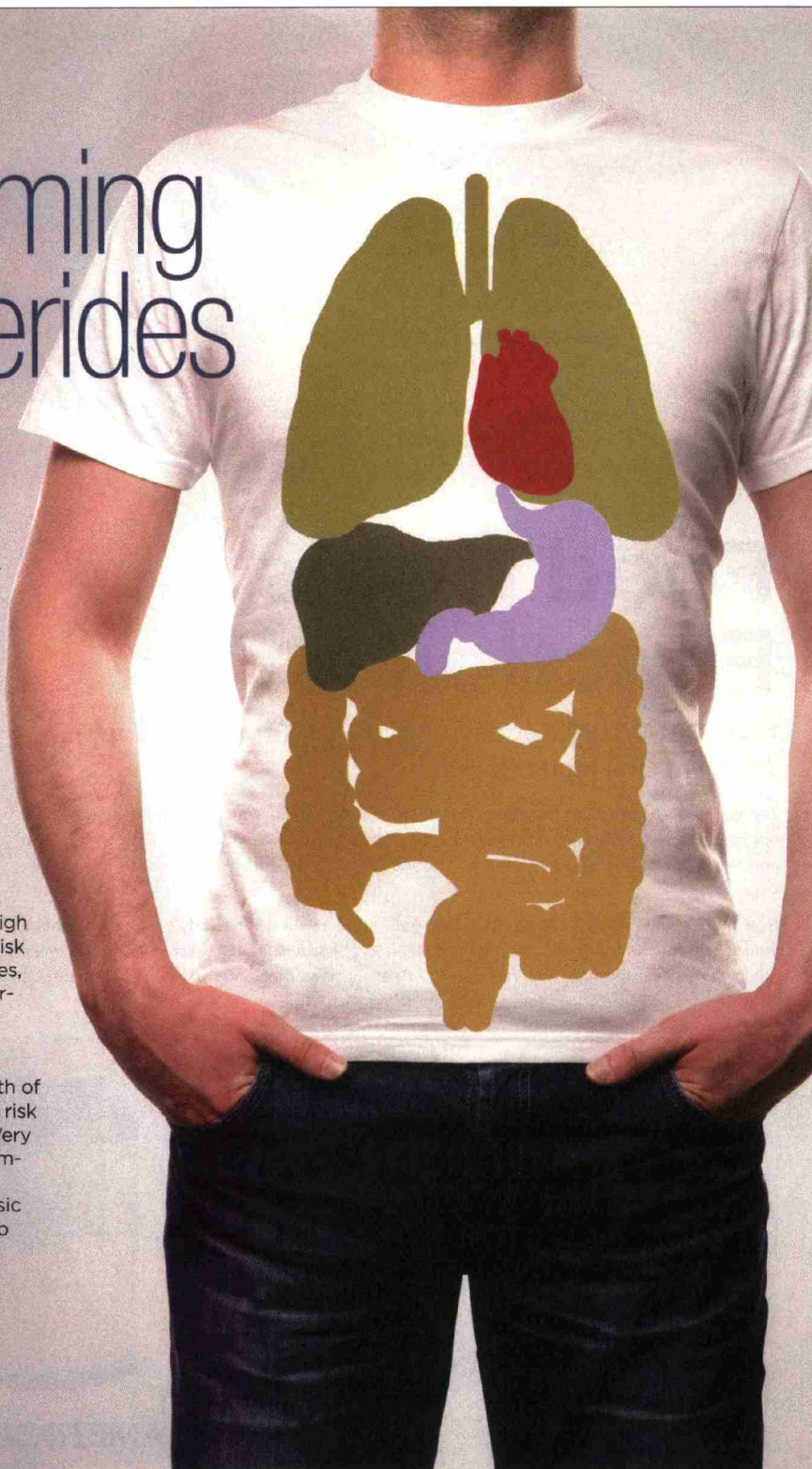
**W**e hear a lot about keeping our cholesterol in balance, but triglycerides are another type of fat in the blood that is cause for concern.

Our body uses triglycerides for energy. While they are essential for life, high levels can lead to trouble.

When we eat, excess calories are converted to triglycerides and stored in fat cells. Frequent overeating—especially of fats and simple carbohydrates—can lead to high levels of triglycerides. Other risk factors include Type 2 diabetes, being overweight, lack of exercise, and genetics.

Elevated levels can cause hardening of the arteries or a thickening of artery walls. Both of these conditions increase the risk of stroke and heart disease. Very high levels can cause an inflammation of the pancreas.

For most people, some basic lifestyle adjustments can help get triglycerides back into a healthful range. >>>



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### Natural remedies

Losing a modest amount of weight (5 to 15 pounds) and getting plenty of exercise (shoot for at least 150 minutes per week) are effective ways to lower triglyceride levels. Certain supplements can help too.

Omega-3 fatty acids from marine sources can significantly reduce triglycerides, according to the American Heart Association (AHA). Fish, krill, and algal oils are rich in EPA and DHA—the types of omega 3s that appear to be most effective. Fatty, coldwater fish such as salmon, tuna, and sardines are great additions to the diet. Some experts recommend as much as 2 to 4 grams of fish oil per day for triglyceride reduction, which is difficult to achieve through diet alone. Capsules, tablets, drinks, and other forms are readily available.

Adding fiber to the diet and cutting carbohydrates will help. Use of alcohol (of all kinds, including wine) seems to contribute to high triglyceride levels, so decreasing or eliminating it should help.

If you are eating more than 300 milligrams (mg) of cholesterol daily (200 mg if you have heart disease), cut back on your consumption of egg yolks, meat high in saturated fats, and whole-milk products, recommends the Mayo Clinic. Try replacing meat with sources of low-fat protein, including dried beans and peas.

Consider these supplements too. As always, discuss any supplement use with your healthcare practitioner to learn about potential side effects, safety during pregnancy, and interactions with medications:

■ **Acetyl-L-carnitine.** This amino-acid-like compound is recommended by [Jacob Teitelbaum](#), MD, an expert in comprehensive medicine. He advises taking 1,000 milligrams a day for three months while avoiding sugar.

■ **Cordyceps.** This unusual mushroom may be especially effective for anyone over 40.

■ **Garlic.** This herb is known for its positive effects on cardiovascular health, including reducing triglycerides. Concentrated powders, capsules, and aged garlic extract appear to offer similar benefits.

■ **Green tea.** Antioxidants in green tea help balance blood lipids, reducing triglycerides and bad cholesterol while boosting good cholesterol.

■ **Hawthorn.** In vivo studies link hawthorn extract to reductions in triglycerides and LDL (bad) cholesterol.

■ **Niacin.** This B vitamin is often prescribed by doctors for lowering triglycerides, but use it with caution and only after medical consultation. It can cause harmful side effects in high doses.

■ **Psyllium.** This fiber appears to be particularly helpful for reducing triglycerides in people with Type 2 diabetes.

■ **Rice bran.** Full-fat rice bran and rice bran oil have been shown to cut triglycerides and have healthful effects on other blood lipids. ■■■

SELECTED SOURCES "AHA Adds Fiber & Omega-3 to Triglyceride Management Recommendations," 5/3/11; "Krill Oil Shows Heart Health Benefits in Humans . . ." by Stephen Daniells, 12/19/13, [www.nutraingredients-usa.com](http://www.nutraingredients-usa.com) ■ **Herbal Therapy & Supplements** by Merrily A. Kuhn and David Winston (\$46.95, Wolters Kluwer, 2008) ■ **Real Cause, Real Cure** by Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, and Bill Gottlieb, CHC (\$18.99, Rodale, 2011) ■ "Supplement Smarts of Cholesterol and Triglycerides," [www.WebMD.com](http://www.WebMD.com) ■ "Triglyceride Levels Predict Stroke Risk in Postmenopausal Women," NYU Langone Medical Center, 2/2/12 ■ "Triglycerides: Why Do They Matter?" by Mayo Clinic staff, [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com), 9/28/12 ■ "What You Can Do to Lower Your Triglycerides," [www.umassmed.edu](http://www.umassmed.edu)

