High Triglycerides?
Here’s what you can do

What are triglycerides?
Triglycerides are a type of fat found in your body and in many of the foods you eat. A high level of triglycerides in your blood:
- Increases your risk of developing inflammation of the pancreas (pancreatitis).
- May increase your risk of heart disease.

How do I know if my triglycerides are high?
If your triglycerides are over 200 mg/dL, they are high.

What causes high triglycerides?
High triglycerides can be caused by certain medical conditions and medications, or it can simply run in your family. Certain lifestyle choices, like smoking or eating habits, can also affect your triglycerides.

The good news is that because triglycerides are affected by the choices you make every day, there are many things you can do daily to lower them. If your triglycerides are high, lowering them can go a long way in protecting you from heart attack, stroke, and other symptoms of heart disease.

Triglyceride tips
People tend to have the greatest success when they make smaller changes instead of trying to change everything at once. Start by choosing one area of your life where you are most interested or passionate about making a change.

If you have diabetes
Keep your blood sugars under good control. Everything you do to take care of your diabetes—such as exercising, eating healthy, or taking your diabetes medications regularly—will help to protect your heart and lower your triglyceride levels.

If you are above optimal weight
Losing as little as 10 pounds can help. Exercise regularly. Start with 10 minutes of daily activity, such as walking, bicycling, or swimming. Work up to at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days.

If you smoke
Quitting is one of the best choices you can make for your health, and for the health of your family. Call or visit your local Health Education Department to learn about all of the Kaiser Permanente programs available to help you quit.

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What should I eat?
Even small adjustments in the way you eat can lead to big changes in your health. Here are some goals to work toward.

**Aim for no more than 2 alcoholic drinks a week.** If your triglycerides are over 500 mg/dL, avoid alcohol altogether.

**Eat a low-fat, high-fiber diet.** Whole grain foods, fruits, and vegetables provide fiber. Eat small amounts of monounsaturated fats, which can be found in olive oil, canola oil, avocado, and nuts.

**Limit sugars.** Avoid baked goods, including those that are labeled “fat-free.” Limit fruit juice to 4 to 8 ounces per day.

**Eat fish at least twice a week.** Salmon, mackerel, herring, trout, and water-packed albacore tuna and sardines are good choices.

What if my triglycerides are still high?
Your doctor may suggest that you work with other health professionals (such as a registered dietitian or clinical health educator) to help meet your goals.

Some people also find that they need medication if their triglyceride levels remain over 500 mg/dL, despite making healthy lifestyle changes.

Talk to your doctor and other members of your care team about your options and what might be right for you.

Simple substitutions can help
Try these swaps to lower your triglycerides for your health.

Instead of sugar-sweetened soda, lemonade, and fruit drinks:
- Try unsweetened fruit juice (no more than 8 ounces a day), fresh or unsweetened fruit (1 to 2 pieces a day), or sugar-free / diet soft drinks.

Instead of baked goods, donuts, ice cream, and other sweets:
- Try sugar-free gelatin or pudding.

Instead of cereals with more than 5 grams of sugar per ounce, white breads, white rice, white pastas:
- Try complex carbohydrates, such as whole-grain breads and cereals, brown rice, oatmeal, and whole-wheat pasta.

Instead of beer, wine, liquor, and other alcoholic drinks:
- Try sparkling water, mineral water, soda, or nonalcoholic sparkling fruit juice (no more than 8 ounces a day).

Other resources: Visit kp.org/mydoctor to view most lab results, email your doctor, and check your preventive health reminders.