

What are triglycerides?

Triglycerides (TGs) are fats (also called “lipids”) that travel in the bloodstream with cholesterol. They are called *triglycerides* because each molecule contains 3 fatty acids. TGs are the major source of energy used and stored by our bodies. They come from what we eat and what our liver makes. High blood TGs can be inherited or develop if your diet is high in processed carbohydrates, if you take certain medicines, or if you are pregnant and/or have obesity, diabetes or other conditions.

What is the role of triglycerides in pregnancy?

TGs normally increase during pregnancy due to the action of hormones. Your body uses TGs for energy so other nutrients can be used by your growing baby. TGs levels peak during the third trimester. Despite this increase, normal blood levels of TGs during pregnancy are 150 mg/dl or less.

What are the risks of high triglycerides in pregnancy?

High TGs can increase the risk of blood clots. Very high TGs above 1,000 mg/dl can cause inflammation of the pancreas, called acute pancreatitis, a rare but serious condition. When high TGs in pregnancy are due to diabetes, the risk of high blood pressure and early labor (also called ‘preeclampsia’) is increased, and your baby may grow too large. Lab testing and early treatment can greatly reduce these risks. The information below from the **National Lipid Association** is a basic guide. Your doctor will decide on the best treatment for you if you have high TGs during pregnancy.



Diet and Lifestyle Changes for High Triglycerides in Pregnancy

Limit refined or processed dietary carbohydrates, such as white breads, white rice, white potatoes, sweetened beverages, sugared cereals, cakes and cookies. Choose *whole grain* breads, cereals and pasta, brown and wild rice, and fresh whole fruit.

Perform cardio exercise such as brisk walking for 30 minutes a day, at least five days a week, if approved by your doctors.

You may benefit from a referral to a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) if your blood triglycerides are higher than 500mg/dl at any time during your pregnancy.

Medications for High Triglycerides in Pregnancy

Prescription Fish Oils, up to 4 capsules per day taken under medical supervision, can be used as a first step to treat high triglycerides. This medicine is presumed safe in pregnancy. Non-prescription fish oil capsules should *not* be used.

Prescription fibrate medication can be taken after the first trimester if your TG levels rise to 1,000 mg/dl or higher.

Referral to a lipid specialist may be recommended by your doctor if your TGs remain 1,000 mg/dl or higher. Your specialist may suggest enrollment in a registry for pregnant women who take medicines for lowering TGs or cholesterol.