

Triglycerides



Does this test have other names?

Lipid panel, fasting lipoprotein panel

What is this test?

This test measures the amount of triglycerides in your blood.

Triglycerides are one of several types of fats in your blood. Other kinds are LDL (bad) cholesterol and HDL (good) cholesterol.

Knowing your triglyceride level is important, especially if you have diabetes, are overweight or a smoker, or are mostly inactive. High triglyceride levels may put you at greater risk for a heart attack or stroke.

This test is part of a group of cholesterol and blood fat tests called a fasting lipoprotein panel, or lipid panel. This panel is recommended for all adults at least once every 5 years, or as recommended by your healthcare provider.

Knowing your triglyceride level helps your healthcare provider suggest healthy changes to your diet or lifestyle. If you have triglycerides that are high to very high, your provider is more likely to prescribe medicines to lower your triglycerides or your LDL cholesterol.

Why do I need this test?

You may need this test as part of a routine checkup. You may also need this test if you're overweight, drink too much alcohol, rarely exercise, or have other conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes.

If you are on cholesterol-lowering medicines, you may have this test to see how well your treatment is working.

What other tests might I have along with this test?

Your healthcare provider will order screening tests for LDL, HDL, and total cholesterol.

What do my test results mean?

Test results may vary depending on your age, gender, health history, and other things. Your test results may be different depending on the lab used. They may not mean you have a problem. Ask your healthcare provider what your test results mean for you.

Results are given in milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL). Normal levels of triglycerides are less than 150 mg/dL.

Here are how higher numbers are classified:

- 150 to 199 mg/dL: Borderline high
- 200 to 499 mg/dL: High
- 500 mg/dL and above: Very high

If you have a high triglyceride level, you have a greater risk for heart attack and stroke.

A triglyceride level above 150 mg/dL also means that you may have an increased risk for metabolic syndrome. This is a cluster of symptoms including high blood pressure, high blood sugar, and high body fat around the waist. These symptoms have been linked to increased risk for diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

High triglyceride levels can also be caused by certain diseases or inherited conditions.

If your triglyceride level is above 200 mg/dL, your healthcare provider may recommend that you do the following:

- Lose weight.
- Limit high-fat foods containing saturated fats. These are animal fats found in meat, butter, and whole milk.
- Limit trans fats that are found in many processed foods like chips and store-bought cookies.
- Cut back on drinks with added sugars, such as soda.
- Limit your alcohol intake.
- Stop smoking.
- Control your blood pressure.
- Exercise for at least 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.
- Limit the calories from fat in your diet to 25% to 35% of your total intake.

If your triglycerides are extremely high—above 500 mg/dL—you may have an added risk for problems with your pancreas. You will likely need medicine to lower your levels along with recommended changes in diet and lifestyle.

How is this test done?

The test is done with a blood sample. A needle is used to draw blood from a vein in your arm or hand.

Does this test pose any risks?

Having a blood test with a needle carries some risks. These include bleeding, infection, bruising, and feeling lightheaded. When the needle pricks your arm or hand, you may feel a slight sting or pain. Afterward, the site may be sore.

What might affect my test results?

Not fasting for the required length of time before the test can affect your results. Certain medicines can affect your results, as can drinking alcohol.

How do I prepare for the test?

If you have this test as part of a cholesterol screening, you will need to not eat or drink anything but water for 9 to 12 hours before the test. Tell your healthcare provider about all medicines, herbs, vitamins, and supplements you are taking. This includes medicines that don't need a prescription and any illegal drugs you may use.

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