



Sugar intake can affect triglycerides

My triglyceride numbers are climbing a bit, and I was told to cut back on my added sugar intake. That surprised me — I know saturated fat and trans fat can affect blood cholesterol and triglycerides, but what does sugar have to do with it?

Your reaction isn't unusual. We normally think that consumption of sugar affects our blood sugar levels, and consumption of fat affects our blood cholesterol and other lipids, including triglycerides.

But it's true — studies in recent years have linked higher sugar consumption with higher levels of triglycerides. It's not exactly clear how or why this occurs, although research suggests that the consumption of fructose — which is found in nearly all types of added sugars (not just the often-maligned high-fructose corn syrup) — increases the creation of fats and triglycerides in the liver as well as the secretion of very low-density lipoproteins, a type of blood cholesterol associated with triglycerides.

Added sugars, which include sweeteners such as honey, molasses, fruit juices and nectars, can also have an additional effect on blood lipids. Last year, a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) found that people who consumed the most added sugar not only had the highest blood

triglyceride levels, but also the lowest levels of HDL, the "good" cholesterol. That's a double-whammy when it comes to risk factors related to heart disease.

Added sugars are caloric sweeteners that are added during processing, preparing or serving foods. So, although an apple contains sugar, it's not classified as an "added" sugar. But canned apples in syrup, or apple pie with sugar sprinkled on the fruit before baking — or Apple Jacks cereal, for that matter — all contain added sugars. Added sugars increase calories but offer no nutritional value. The JAMA study, which included data from more than 6,000 adults, found that added sugars accounted for about 360 calories a day in the diet, or 16 percent of total calories. The American Heart Association recommends no more than 100 calories a day from added sugars for women; 150 for men.

Other things that can increase triglyceride levels are heavy alcohol use (more than one drink a day for women; more than two per day for men) and high consumption of saturated fat or trans fats. But added sugars definitely play a role, too.

The Cleveland Clinic offers easy-to-read, detailed guidelines about how to reduce high triglyceride levels in "How Foods Affect Triglycerides" on its website. See it at: <http://bit.ly/clvclintri>.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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