



# Healthy Outlook

TAKING CHARGE OF METABOLIC SYNDROME

WINTER 2011

## Take Your Triglycerides to Heart

Triglycerides play a big role in your heart health. Take this quiz to find out more about them.

**1. How often should you have triglycerides checked?**

- A.** Annually
- B.** Every two years
- C.** Once every five years

**2. Conditions that can result if triglycerides are too high?**

- A.** Coronary heart disease
- B.** Heart attack
- C.** All of the above

**2. Which factors increase the risk of developing high triglycerides?**

- A.** Obesity
- B.** Diabetes
- C.** A family history of high triglycerides
- D.** All of the above

**Answers**

**1 C.** People ages 20 and older should have their triglycerides measured every five years with

a test called a lipid profile. This test also checks total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and HDL “good” cholesterol. However, for those with metabolic syndrome, your doctor may advise you to have this test done more often.

**2 C.** High triglyceride levels boost the risk for both of these medical problems.

**3 D.** All these factors can increase your chances of developing high triglycerides.



### Which Foods Pack the Most Fiber?

According to the American Heart Association, a high-fiber diet may protect you from heart disease. Fiber also helps lower LDL or “bad” cholesterol levels. It could even help decrease blood pressure and prevent diabetes.

How much fiber do you need? Men younger than 50 should aim for 38 grams of fiber daily, and those older than 50 should consume 30 grams. For women younger than 50, the daily recommendation is 25 grams of fiber. Women older than 50 need at least 21 grams of fiber daily. To meet your daily fiber recommendation, eat plenty of fiber-rich foods including fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains.

The government’s dietary guidelines recommend that whole grain foods make up at least half of your grain servings—or about three servings daily. Some high-fiber, whole grain foods, containing at least 5 grams or more per cup, include cooked barley and quinoa. Have these instead of your usual white rice for a boost of fiber and nutrition.

## Good Health Guidelines

**Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of risk factors (elevated triglycerides, increased blood pressure and blood sugar, lowered levels of HDL cholesterol, and increased abdominal fat) in a person that increases the risk for heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. People with this condition need to get certain tests and screenings. Please discuss the following topics with your health care provider.**

- Having a lipid profile done at least once a year
- Having your blood pressure checked at every office visit
- Screening for diabetes once a year, or every three years if your blood sugar reading is normal
- Reviewing your medications

**Be sure to talk with your health care provider about these topics:**

- Manage your weight
- Get help to quit smoking

### A CLOSER LOOK

#### Why a Regular Diabetes Screening Is Important

Higher-than-normal blood glucose affects many people with metabolic syndrome. If your blood glucose is elevated—but not enough to indicate that you have diabetes—it may mean that you have pre-diabetes. It also means you are at risk of developing full-blown diabetes.

Even if your blood glucose is normal, you could still be at risk of developing diabetes. That’s because other aspects of metabolic syndrome raise the risk, too. Having low levels of high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL) and high levels of triglycerides, or high blood pressure also increases your likelihood of developing diabetes.

Many people with pre-diabetes or diabetes have no symptoms. A screening is the only way to know if you have these conditions. Once you know, you can take steps to control them.

*Although these are suggested guidelines for care, please check with your benefits plan for coverage.*

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# The No-Excuse 30-Minute Workout

Exercise is one of the best ways to prevent type 2 diabetes in people with metabolic syndrome, says a report in *Diabetes & Metabolism*. Exercise also helps to lower the risk for heart disease. It helps to improve blood pressure, triglycerides, blood glucose, and weight. Get the benefits! Try this 30-minute workout you can do anywhere.



## Warm-Up—5 Minutes

Slowly walk, bicycle, or go up and down the stairs.

## Aerobic Exercise—10 Minutes

Choose an activity you enjoy—anything that raises your heart rate and makes you breathe harder, like walking briskly, jogging, dancing, bicycling, or jumping rope. Do it at least hard enough that you can talk but not sing. Comfortable? Then work harder so you can't say



more than a few words without stopping for a breath. This gives you more benefits in the same time. Pick different activities on different days to prevent boredom.


## Strengthening—10 Minutes

Try to do each exercise eight to 12 times, then rest one minute and do eight to 12 more. Do only as many as you can while maintaining good form.

- 1. Squats:** Stand with your back to a sturdy chair, feet shoulder-width apart. Reach forward in front of your shoulders. Bend forward slightly at the hips, back straight. Bend your knees, and lower your bottom toward the chair to a count of four until you're almost sitting. Keep your knees in line with your ankles and behind your toes. Pause. Rise to a count of two.
- 2. Wall pushups:** Stand facing a wall. Reach forward in front of your shoulders. The wall should be just out of reach. Lean forward slightly from your ankles, back straight, and place your palms against the wall. Bend your elbows, and lower yourself toward the wall to a count of four. Pause. Push up to a count of two.
- 3. Abdominal curls:** Lie down on your back. Bend your knees, and plant your feet flat on the floor, hands behind your head. Point your elbows out to the sides. Lift your chin toward the ceiling, and your shoulders and upper back should be off the floor to a count of two. Pause. Lower yourself to a count of two.

## Cool Down—5 Minutes

Walk slowly, and then stretch gently.



# How to Choose the Right Multivitamin

About one-third of American adults take a multivitamin and mineral supplement. We buy these pills more than any other dietary supplement. They won't magically erase the effects of poor eating habits. But they can help fill nutrient gaps, if you choose with care.

The diets of many Americans are short on the antioxidant vitamins A, C, and E, says the American Dietetic Association (ADA). Intake of the minerals calcium, potassium, and magnesium may be low, too. Some people are at risk for other shortages. For example, older people and those with darker skin have a harder time making vitamin D naturally. It's made in your skin when you're in the sunlight. Talk with your doctor and a registered dietitian. This is the best way to determine if you have nutrient deficiencies that require supplementation.

## What the Research Says

Research on the health effects of supplements is mixed.

### ■ Cardiovascular disease.

People with higher antioxidant intakes may have lower risk for cardiovascular disease. Antioxidants may combat diabetes, too. But

a study in *Cardiovascular Therapeutics* found supplements don't necessarily prevent either disease. Other studies have found a link between calcium supplementation and increased risk for heart attack.

### ■ Insulin and blood pressure.

Magnesium seems to improve insulin sensitivity and high blood pressure, but evidence so far is limited or weak.

### ■ Obesity and diabetes.

Low vitamin D is linked with obesity and diabetes. However, it's not known yet if supplemental vitamin D reduces the risk for these conditions.

Overall, research hasn't shown that multivitamins can prevent chronic disease.

## Choosing a Product

Until research tells us more, these three steps can guide you if you're looking for a multivitamin.

### 1. Find out your specific needs.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) sets guidelines about how much of each vitamin or mineral people need. The guidelines, called dietary reference intakes (DRIs), are based mainly on age and gender. Learn which guidelines apply to you. Go to [fnic.nal.usda.gov/](http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/) and search for "dietary reference intakes," or ask your doctor.

Then talk with your doctor about your lifestyle, diet, health, and any medicines and supplements you already take. These and other factors can affect your nutrient needs. For example, smokers shouldn't get extra beta-carotene because it raises their lung cancer risk. People who have cut certain foods from their diet because of a food allergy might be short on certain vitamins or minerals.

### 2. Resist the allure of claims made on labels.

The most

common claims on supplement labels are claims the FDA calls “structure/function claims.” These structure or function claims describe how a product may affect organs in the body, a body system, or general well-being. These types of claims cannot mention a specific health problem, and they also don’t require FDA approval. A disclaimer must follow these types of claims, stating that the product “is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.” However, “health claims”—which say a substance lowers the risk for a specific disease—do need FDA approval.

**3. Pick a product that’s been tested.** The nonprofit groups U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP) and NSF International test supplements. The makers of multivitamins can volunteer to take part. Testers check factors like whether a multivitamin contains what the label says. They also confirm that makers follow good manufacturing practices set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Products that pass can display a USP or NSF seal of approval.

No group—not USP, NSF, or FDA—checks whether supplements are safe or effective before they go on the market. There is limited regulation and oversight of the supplement industry in general. Manufacturers are supposed to ensure that their products are safe and effective.

Good health has more to do with the types and amounts of foods you eat than with the level of individual nutrients you get. So focus on putting healthy meals on the table, even if you have a good multivitamin in your medicine chest.

# Take Action Against Prehypertension

Normal blood pressure is less than 120 over 80. Prehypertension means the first number is 120 to 139, or the second number is 80 to 89. High blood pressure is 140 over 90 or higher.

Has your blood pressure crept slightly above normal? Reduce your risk for higher blood pressure today with these everyday choices:

- **Limit salt, and select lower-sodium foods.** Sodium can increase blood pressure. The American Heart Association suggests getting less than 1,500 mg of sodium per day.
- **Eat more fruits and vegetables.** They are good sources of potassium and magnesium, which may improve blood pressure.
- **Exercise 30 minutes a day, five days a week.** Exercise helps to reduce blood pressure.
- **Shed extra pounds.** Excess weight raises your risk for high blood pressure. If you’re overweight, losing just 10 pounds may help. To reduce calories, choose low-fat dairy products and lean meat, and cut back on added sugars by having fewer sweets and sugared drinks.
- **Relax.** In an issue of *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine*, researchers reported anxiety can increase blood pressure and may tempt people to turn to less-than-healthy habits, like overeating. Choose better

options, like exercising or spending time with friends. Relaxation techniques, like deep breathing, can lower blood pressure, too.

- **Limit alcohol.** Having too much alcohol raises blood pressure. Men, have no more than two drinks per day; women, no more than one. One serving is 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80 proof spirits.





**Dietary supplement.** A pill or liquid made up of one or more vitamins, minerals, or other ingredients. You may consider taking them to fill in any nutritional gaps in your diet or to address a specific deficiency or health need. You should always tell your doctor what dietary supplements you take.

**Fasting glucose levels.** The amount of glucose in the blood after a person hasn't eaten for at least eight hours. A blood test can check these levels. Test results help diagnose pre-diabetes and diabetes.

**Prehypertension.** This is the stage between normal blood pressure and high blood pressure. Someone with prehypertension is more likely to have high blood pressure in the future.

**Relaxation techniques.** Activities that you can do that may help reduce stress. Some examples of these are yoga, meditation, massage, and deep breathing. These strategies may help ease your body's reactions to stress.

## Revitalize Your Relationships

Social connections matter to our health. An analysis of 148 studies in *PLoS Medicine* found people have a higher risk for death if they have a weaker social network, receive less social support, or feel others aren't there for them. Forming more relationships and better quality relationships might help.

### What's Your Style?

A person's style of connecting plays a part, according to a study in *Health Psychology*. Those who rated themselves higher on a scale of "anxious attachment" were more likely to have cardiovascular problems. Anxious attachment means you often worry the people you care about don't love you or won't want to stay with you. You may find people unwilling to get as close as you'd like or are scared away by your need to be very close to them. People with anxious attachment were more likely to have a stroke, heart attack, or high blood pressure.

### Making Connections

Psychologists think our attachment style stems from our relationships with the people who cared for us in childhood. But this doesn't mean it's set in stone. We can learn to build healthy connections. Here's how:

- **Strive for balance.** Share openly, listen actively, and seek people who do both. Focus on relationships where you feel mutual liking, respect, and trust. Practice giving and accepting help. When there's a conflict, try to forgive and work together to resolve it. Nurture several relationships so you have more people to rely on.
- **Treat yourself well.** This can enhance your self-worth and ability to connect with others. Exercise, eat healthy, and get rest. Pay attention to your feelings. Invest in learning more about yourself.
- **Create opportunities.** Invite family and friends to spend time together doing things you all enjoy. To meet new people, be active in your community. Join civic, political, faith, or volunteer groups. Attend cultural or sporting events. Try taking a class.





## Adding Cinnamon May Combat Diabetes Risk

When it comes to preventing diabetes, the pillars of a healthy diet include eating more nutrient-rich foods, such as fruits and vegetables and eating less fat and fewer calories so you maintain a healthy weight. Small tweaks to your menu may lower your diabetes risk even further and spice up your meals at the same time.

Cinnamon has been used for thousands of years in Chinese medicine to help regulate blood glucose levels. Recent research shows it might have some benefits. A study in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*, overweight or obese people with impaired fasting glucose took daily cinnamon supplements. After 12 weeks, tests showed their fasting glucose levels became normal. The researchers say cinnamon has insulin-like effects. Adding cinnamon to your meals could have benefits. Also, make sure to talk with your doctor to ensure that your blood glucose levels are in the healthy range.

Here are some ideas for getting more cinnamon in your diet:

- Add cinnamon to breakfast cereal, oatmeal, or toast to start your day off with a little zing.
- Sprinkle cinnamon over sliced fruit, or use it in fruit-based dishes. For a snack, arrange sliced apples or bananas over a bowl of low-fat cottage cheese, and dust it with cinnamon. Cinnamon goes well with peaches, too. Look for a peach cobbler recipe low in fat and added sugar.
- Flavor vegetables with cinnamon. It's a good match for sweet potatoes, yams, carrots, and squash. Try it along with nutmeg.
- Make baked jerk chicken. This dish features chicken rubbed in a blend of spices, including cinnamon, allspice, black pepper, oregano, and thyme.

The American Cancer Society has another creative suggestion. If you're trying to quit smoking, keep your mouth busy by chewing on a cinnamon stick.

## Peter Pumpkin Squares

*Extra canned pumpkin from the holidays? Try this quick and delicious treat!*

24 squares

### Ingredients

- 1 can (16 ounces) pumpkin
- 1½ cup brown sugar
- 4 eggs
- ¾ cup canola oil
- 1½ cup whole wheat flour
- 1½ cup rolled oats
- 1 tbsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- Margarine or butter to grease the pan

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a medium bowl, stir together the pumpkin, brown sugar, eggs, and oil. Mix well.
3. In a large bowl, mix flour, oats, cinnamon, baking powder, and baking soda. Add the pumpkin mix to the flour.
4. Grease a 9-by-13-inch baking pan with butter or margarine.
5. Pour the batter into the greased baking pan.
6. Bake for 30 minutes.

### Nutrition Information

Each square contains approximately 180 calories, 8 g fat, 110 mg sodium, 25 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 3 g protein.



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