

## **EATING FOR A HEALTHY HEART**

### **A PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET ON: TRIGLYCERIDES**

#### **What are triglycerides?**

Triglycerides are a type of fat (lipid) that are carried around the body in the blood and are needed for some essential body functions.

#### **What does a high triglyceride level mean?**

A high triglyceride level is usually referred to as hypertriglyceridaemia or hyperlipidaemia and is a risk factor for heart disease. The level of triglycerides that is considered high for you will depend partly on whether you have any other risk factors for heart disease, for example, a high blood pressure or family history of heart disease, and whether you are overweight or smoke. Your doctor or healthcare professional will be able to advise you of your current and ideal triglyceride level.

#### **How can I reduce my triglyceride level?**

Many factors can affect your triglyceride level and your risk of heart disease. In some people a high triglyceride level may be due to hereditary factors, however, your body weight and diet can also affect your levels, in particular your intake of alcohol and sugar. The best approach is therefore to:

- 1. Lose weight if you are overweight.** If you need advice to help with weight loss look at the 'Help with weight loss' section of our website - link below  
<http://www.lnds.nhs.uk/PatientsandPublic-DietandLifestyleAdvice-HelpwithWeightLoss.aspx>
- 2. Eat a diet low in sugar.** Limit the amount of sweets, chocolate, cakes, puddings and sugar coated cereal you eat and choose products such as drinks and yogurts that are labelled diet or sugar free. If you add sugar to your cereal or drinks try reducing this or using an artificial sweetener instead.
- 3. Keep your alcohol intake low.** Be aware that the recommended upper limit is 2-3 units per week for women, and 3-4 units for men, and avoiding more than 4 units on any one day. Recent research also recommends having 2 alcohol free days per week. One unit is equal to about  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint beer or lager, a small glass of sherry or a single pub measure of spirits. There are  $1\frac{1}{2}$  units in a 125ml glass of wine.

Reducing your sugar and alcohol intake will help with weight loss too. If you are already a healthy weight you will probably need to eat more starchy foods such as bread, cereals, rice, pasta and potatoes (preferably high fibre varieties) to help maintain your weight.