On your last visit to your physician, your triglycerides were found to be 430 milligrams per deciliter (dL)—well above the normal limits. Normal fasting triglycerides should be less than 150 milligrams per deciliter. You probably left his/her office, with several questions needing answers.

What are triglycerides anyway? They are bundles of fats found stored in the body and in the bloodstream—especially after eating. The body makes triglyceride structures from foods/beverages we eat: carbohydrates and alcohol (serve as the backbone of the triglyceride structure) and/or fatty foods (provide three fatty acids). About 99 percent of the fat stored in our body is triglycerides. High triglyceride levels in the blood tend to co-exist with low levels of high density lipoproteins (good cholesterol).

Which foods are particularly high in triglycerides? Trans fatty acids (partially hydrogenated vegetable oil) are found in stick margarine, vegetable shortening and some prepared foods such as cakes, cookies, crackers and commercially fried foods. Trans fatty acids (trans fats) occur naturally in small quantities in meats (beef, pork, lamb), butter and milk. Reading labels when shopping for foods is essential. By January, 2006, the Food and Drug Administration will require that all food manufacturers add the nutritive value of trans fatty acids to the nutrition information on food labels.

"Recently, several consumers have inquired about listings of foods containing triglycerides" remarked ___________________________, the ________________________County Extension Agent in Family and Consumer Sciences. Foods that should be reduced are those food sources (saturated and trans fats) that raise low-density lipoprotein (LDL) or bad cholesterol. To lower triglycerides, the American Heart Association (http://www.americanheart.org) meal plan provides a variety of foods with attention to food sources of fats that can raise your low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol. This heart-healthy meal plan limits saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and sodium. Eat lean protein foods, low-fat milk products and foods with plenty of fiber (whole grains, vegetables and fruits). Also, to lower triglycerides in your blood, the carbohydrate intake can be moderate, along with eating less saturated and trans fats, and drinking little—if any—alcohol. Maintaining weight and daily physical activity are important life style changes too.

"By making these few simple changes" (explains ___________________________), "you can make a difference in your blood triglyceride levels." For more information about your individualized meal plan and recommended changes in your lifestyles, contact a local registered dietitian.

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