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## *Triglyceride Studies See Greater Risk to Heart*

Two new studies are adding importance to health concerns about triglycerides, a fatty substance in the blood that can increase the risk of heart disease. The studies, reported yesterday, indicate that triglyceride blood levels now considered safe are actually far too high.

Current medical guidelines state that blood levels of triglycerides, usually tested at the same time as cholesterol levels, should be no higher than 200 milligrams a deciliter. In a study of 460 men and women, researchers at the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore found that patients with levels of 100 and higher, compared with patients with levels below 100, had twice the risk of having a heart attack, and also of dying from one, or requiring bypass surgery or another procedure to treat blocked coronary arteries. Triglycerides can contribute to fatty deposits in the arteries.

"The ideal level would now be less than 100," Dr. Michael Miller, the

study's director, said in a telephone interview. "Our data need to be confirmed, but this is an issue that the National Cholesterol Education Program may need to revisit." Dr. Miller presented his team's findings yesterday at a meeting of the American Heart Association in New Orleans.

A second study, also presented at the meeting, showed other potential harm in triglycerides: at levels above 190, they make the blood markedly more viscous. "The resistance to blood flow is increased, and the heart has to pump more," said Dr. Robert Rosenson, an author of the study at the Rush Medical College in Chicago. "And less oxygen and nutrients are delivered to the heart muscle."

Dr. Rosenson said other studies had shown that people with more viscous blood had a greater risk of heart disease.

Although his study showed that viscosity became a problem at the

190 level, Dr. Rosenson agreed, in light of findings like those of the first study, that recommended levels should be below 100.

Fatty foods increase triglyceride levels in the blood, and alcohol and sweets may also do so in some people. Dr. Miller said many patients with triglyceride levels of 100 to 200 could lower their levels by exercising and eating a low-fat diet.

"The good news," he said, "is that triglycerides are much more responsive than cholesterol to those kinds of changes, and may be reduced by as much as 40 percent."

Eating certain fish three times a week — like sardines, mackerel, salmon, herring and tuna — can help, because they contain omega-3 fatty acids, which lower triglycerides. Minimizing or avoiding alcohol and sugary foods like candy can also yield a sharp drop in triglycerides in some people, Dr. Rosenson said. But some people may need treatment with drugs or fish-oil capsules.