

Prescription omega-3-acid ethyl esters for the treatment of very high triglycerides.

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Triglyceride (TG) levels can increase for numerous reasons, including a sedentary lifestyle, an unhealthy diet, especially one rich in refined carbohydrates, and comorbidities. According to the National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP), the normal TG level is < 150 mg/dL. Patients with very high TG (VHTG) levels (> or = 500 mg/dL) should be promptly managed and treated to reach lipid treatment goals, as determined by the NCEP. Lowering TG levels is the primary management goal in these patients, while lowering low-density lipoprotein cholesterol and non-high-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels are secondary goals. Therapeutic lifestyle changes are often recommended initially for patients with elevated TGs; however, concomitant drug therapy is often required. Data show that intake of eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) can significantly decrease serum TGs, along with plasma concentrations of certain lipoproteins. Omega-3-acid ethyl esters are available by prescription or as dietary supplements. Clinical trials in adult patients with VHTGs show that four 1 g capsules of prescription omega-3 fatty acids, which contain 465 mg of EPA and 375 mg of DHA per capsule, can effectively decrease TG levels by up to 45%, and is generally well tolerated.