

The Effect of Oolong Tea Consumption on Postprandial Triglyceride Levels: A Randomized, Double-blind, Placebo-controlled Crossover Study

Akkarach Bumrungpert* Rewadee Chongsuwat*

ABSTRACT

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Oolong tea is produced by the semi-fermentation of the fresh leaves of *Camellia sinensis*. The major bioactive compound in oolong tea is oolong tea polymerized polyphenol (OTPP). Previous studies found that oolong tea reduces the absorption of fat by inhibiting lipase enzyme resulting in increased fecal lipid excretion. The objective of this study was to examine the effect of oolong tea on blood triglyceride levels after fat intake. Study design was a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled crossover study. The subjects were randomly divided into 2 groups; oolong tea group (n = 15) and placebo group (n = 15). The subjects were served 500 mL oolong tea (70 mg OTPP) or placebo to drink and both groups consumed 200 g corn soup (40 g fat). Blood samples were taken before and at the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th hours after the consumption of oolong tea and corn soup. The oolong tea significantly decreased

changes in the triglyceride level after fat intake. As shown by the incremental blood triglyceride area under the curve (AUC), oolong tea significantly suppressed the postprandial elevation in incremental blood triglyceride AUC compared with placebo. No significant differences in adverse symptoms were observed between groups. Therefore, oolong tea containing 70 mg OTPP can decrease postprandial blood triglyceride after fat intake by blocking fat absorption, suggesting that oolong tea may be a promising anti-obesity agent for weight control. However, we recommend drinking oolong tea without sugar so that it will not increase calorie intake and contributes to a healthy diet, which with regular exercise can contribute to permanent weight control.

Keywords: oolong tea, OTPP, fat absorption, triglyceride

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Introduction

The prevalence of obesity in the world remains remarkably high. High obesity rates are associated with increased risk of cardiovascular disease and metabolic syndrome factors¹. A reduction in dietary fat intake by decreasing the absorption of dietary fat has the potential to positively influence body weight by reducing energy intake and blood lipid levels. This, in turn, could lead to a reduction in obesity-related risk factors and disorders. A reduction in dietary fat intake could result in positive health benefits; however, this requires behavioral changes that many individuals find difficult to maintain. Thus, reducing caloric intake from fat by blocking absorption at the gastrointestinal tract represents an interesting alternative. This has led to the search for natural products that can effectively and safely reduce dietary fat absorption. The lipase inhibitor, Orlistat, was the first such medicine, but has fallen out of favor due to its unfavorable side effects². Functional foods are promising alternative medicines that have been used in the reduction of fat absorption; playing a mitigating role in obesity and its complications, and reducing treatment costs.

Several studies have shown that tea, especially oolong tea, has many health benefits. Oolong tea is produced by the semi-fermentation of the fresh leaves of

Camellia sinensis. During the semi-fermentation process, the constituents of the leaves are enzymatically converted to numerous bioactive compounds, specifically oolong tea polymerized polyphenol (OTPP). The health benefits of oolong tea include anti-oxidant³, anti-obesity⁴⁻⁵, and anti-diabetic properties⁶, as well as a moderating effect on the risk for cardiovascular disease⁷. Moreover, recent researches have demonstrated that oolong tea consumption increases the metabolic rate, fat oxidation⁸, energy expenditure⁹, as well as lipid excretion into the feces in subjects fed a high-lipid diet¹⁰. *In vitro* studies suggest that OTPP could interfere with fat absorption via the inhibition of lipase activity¹¹. Also, animal study has shown the suppressive effect of OTPP on postprandial triglyceride after high-fat diet loading in rats and mice¹². Furthermore, *in vivo* study has shown that OTPP suppressed both lymphatic triglyceride absorption and serum triglyceride elevation with a high lipid diet¹³. Hara Y et al.¹⁴ demonstrated that OTPP suppressed postprandial serum triglyceride and chylomicron levels. Therefore, a drink containing OTPP has the potential to decrease blood triglyceride levels after fat intake. The objective of this study was to examine the effect of oolong tea on blood triglyceride levels after fat intake in Thailand.

Method

Subjects

Thirty men and women between 20 and 60 years old, with a fasting blood triglyceride level between 100-250 mg/dl were enrolled in this study. Exclusion criteria included a smoker, pregnant or lactating women, history of cardiovascular, hepatic, renal or diabetic diseases, cold, chronic diarrhea, constipation, gastrointestinal disorder or digestive disorder, tea allergy, or regular use of a pharmaceutical or food supplement that affects fat metabolism. The study was explained to the subjects and informed consent was obtained from all the participants.

The study was approved by the Ethical Review Committee for Human Research, Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University (MUPH 2014-144). Furthermore, this study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki on human subjects.

Study design

The study design was a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled crossover study. The subjects were randomly divided into two groups (oolong tea group and placebo group). They were followed by a crossover design including 7-day washout periods and 1-day for study day. In addition, the subjects consumed meals prepared by researcher for 3 days before study days. Dietitian set the diet based on energy requirements for each gender. Calorie intakes

were 1,600 kcal for females and 2,000 kcal for males. Nutrient distributions were 57% carbohydrate, 13% protein, and 30% fat of total energy. The subjects were not allowed to consume anything other than the food or drink designated by the researcher during this period. On the study day, the subjects who fasted provided blood sample before the fat loading test. Then, the subjects consumed 500 mL oolong tea or placebo and 200 g corn soup containing 40 g of fat, 1.5 g of protein and, 8.5 g of carbohydrate. The subjects rested in the testing room, and blood samples were taken at the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th hours after the consumption of corn soup. Fifty mL of water were given between the 1st-5th hours of blood being taken. During the 8-hour period after the test, the subjects were asked to indicate if they experienced symptoms such as nausea, bloating, abdominal discomfort, rectal gas, and obfuscating symptoms.

Beverages

Oolong tea and placebo drink were manufactured by TIPCO F&B Co., Ltd, Thailand. The nutritional and bioactive contents of test drink are shown in Table 1.

Placebo drink was prepared with caramel for coloring. Double-blind crossover design was carried out in this study; none of the participants were able to differentiate between the two beverages in the experiment.



Table 1 Nutritional and Bioactive Content of Test Drinks.

Nutritional and content	Content (per 500 mg)	
	Oolong tea	Placebo
Calories	0 kcal	0 kcal
Protein	N.D.* (< 0.1 g/100 ml)	N.D.* (< 0.1 g/100 ml)
Fat	N.D.* (< 0.1 g/100 ml)	N.D.* (< 0.1 g/100 ml)
Carbohydrate	0 g	0 g
Caffeine	0 mg	0 mg
OTPP	70 mg	0 mg

* N.D. = Not detectable

Analyses of blood sample

The following parameters were measured: serum total cholesterol (TC), low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C), high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-C), Triglyceride (TG), Fasting blood glucose (FBG), HbA1C, Insulin, Hemoglobin (Hb), Hematocrit (Hct), Serum glutamic oxaloacetic transaminase (SGOT), Serum glutamic pyruvic transaminase (SGPT), Alkaline Phosphatase (ALP), gamma-glutamyl transpeptidase (g-GTP), Uric acid, Blood urea nitrogen (BUN), Creatinine, Bilirubin, Lactate dehydrogenase, and Creatine kinase. All biomarkers were measured at N-Health Asia Lab, Thailand, a medical laboratory with ISO15189:2007 certification.

Statistical analysis

All data were represented as mean \pm SD. Statistical difference of changes of blood triglyceride and incremental blood triglyceride AUC between the treatment group and

placebo group were tested by t-test. Two-way repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the post-prandial blood triglyceride. Pearson Chi-Square was used to compare the adverse effects between groups. The levels of significance were set at $p < 0.05$.

Results

Characteristics of subjects

Thirty healthy volunteers (15 male and 15 female) were recruited for the study. Their mean age was 36.5 years, the average BMI was 25.79 kg/m², and mean triglyceride level was 150.93 mg/dL. Other biochemical markers are shown in Table 2.

All the subjects were able to follow the study protocol without difficulty. There were no significant differences in the baseline levels of serum triglyceride from those in the two different sessions.

Table 2 General Characteristic and Blood Chemistry of Subjects.

General Characteristic and Biochemical Parameters	Value
Total Number, Male/Female (n/n)	30 (15/15)
Age (years)	36.50 ± 11.31
BMI (kg/m ²)	25.79 ± 4.40
Body fat (%)	28.79 ± 7.33
Waist circumference (cm)	84.62 ± 13.50
Systolic blood pressure (mm Hg)	126.10 ± 12.11
Diastolic blood pressure (mm Hg)	79.77 ± 8.33
Pulse rate (beat/min)	78.07 ± 12.99
Total cholesterol (mg/dL)	218.33 ± 58.96
LDL-C (mg/dL)	151.43 ± 38.95
HDL-C (mg/dL)	56.83 ± 16.29
Triglyceride (mg/dL)	150.93 ± 52.03
FBG (mg/dL)	91.67 ± 24.13
HbA1C (%)	5.52 ± 0.82
Insulin (mIU/mL)	11.89 ± 6.15
Hb (g/dL)	13.89 ± 2.24
Hct (%)	41.66 ± 5.74
SGOT (U/L)	19.00 ± 5.83
SGPT (U/L)	21.20 ± 12.53
ALP (U/L)	60.53 ± 15.97
γ-GTP (U/L)	26.83 ± 13.79
Uric acid (mg/dL)	5.27 ± 1.47
BUN (mg/dL)	11.01 ± 2.02
Creatinine (mg/dL)	0.78 ± 0.16
Bilirubin (mg/dL)	0.43 ± 0.15
Lactate dehydrogenase (U/L)	169.83 ± 32.60
Creatine kinase (U/L)	108.97 ± 42.49

All the data were expressed as means ± standard deviation (SD)



The effect of the oolong tea on blood triglyceride levels after fat intake

The postprandial responses in the serum triglyceride following the ingestion of 40 g fat-diet with or without drink containing OTPP are shown in Table 3-4 and Figure 1-2. The serum triglyceride levels significantly increased over the first 5 hours after the fat-meal. The drink containing OTPP significantly decreased

changes of triglyceride levels after the fat-meal intake compared with placebo (Table 3 and Figure 1). As shown by the incremental blood triglyceride area under the curve (AUC), the oolong tea significantly suppressed the postprandial elevation in serum triglyceride (incremental AUC) compared with placebo (Table 4 and Figure 2).

Table 3 Changes of D Triglyceride Levels (mg/dL) after Fat Loading.

Δ TG (hr)	Placebo	Oolong Tea	p*
1	36.33 \pm 6.68 ^a	31.00 \pm 6.18 ^f	0.002
2	62.30 \pm 6.62 ^b	55.63 \pm 6.53 ^g	< 0.001
3	76.50 \pm 6.78 ^c	60.93 \pm 5.64 ^h	< 0.001
4	84.33 \pm 9.16 ^d	65.50 \pm 6.79 ⁱ	< 0.001
5	71.13 \pm 8.79 ^e	59.03 \pm 8.13 ^{gh}	< 0.001

a- i Values with different superscripts within a column are significantly different from each other (p < 0.05) according to two-way repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA)

*Statistically significant difference between groups at p < 0.05

Table 4 Incremental Blood Triglyceride AUC.

Time (min)	Incremental Triglyceride AUC (mg.min/dL)		p*
	Placebo	Oolong Tea	
0-60	1,090.00 \pm 200.45 ^a	923.00 \pm 189.19 ^f	0.002
0-120	4,049.00 \pm 484.86 ^b	3,517.00 \pm 449.12 ^g	< 0.001
0-180	8,213.00 \pm 777.32 ^c	6,992.00 \pm 722.58 ^h	< 0.001
0-240	13,038.00 \pm 1,179.22 ^d	10,819.00 \pm 1,002.58 ⁱ	< 0.001
0-300	17,702.00 \pm 1,565.60 ^e	14,485.00 \pm 1,302.46 ^j	< 0.001

a- j Values with different superscripts within a column are significantly different from each other (p < 0.05) according to two-way repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA)

*Statistically significant difference between groups at p < 0.05

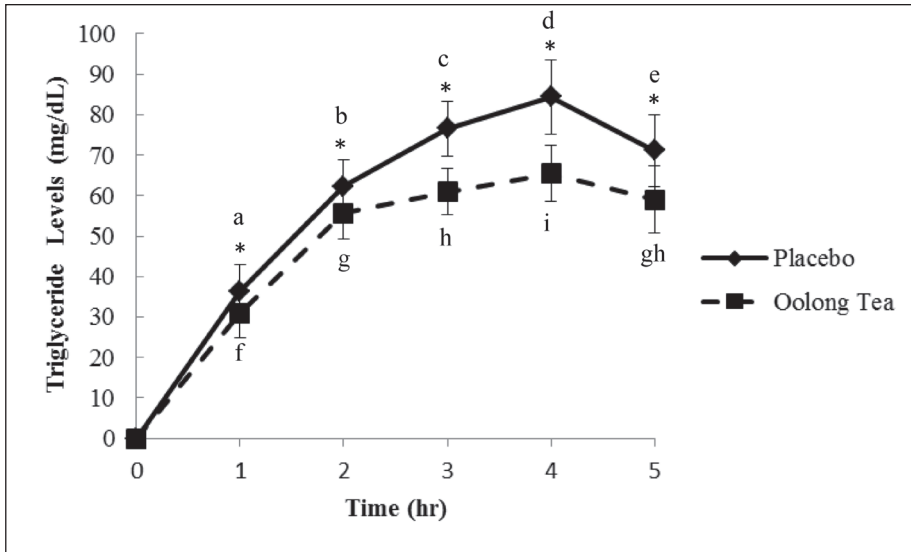


Figure 1 Changes of Triglyceride Levels after Fat Loading.

a- i Values with different superscripts are significantly different from each other ($p < 0.05$) according to two-way repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA)

12 * Statistically significant difference between groups at $p < 0.05$

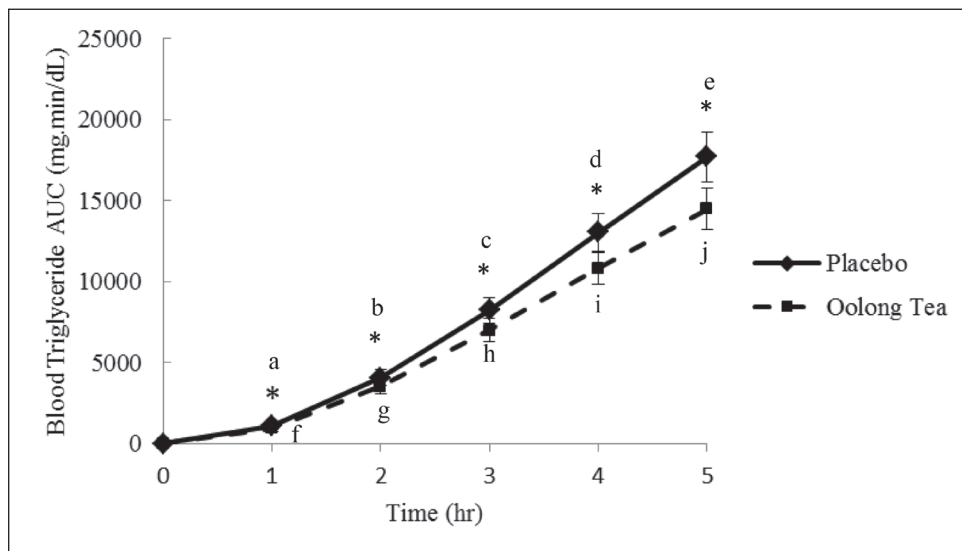


Figure 2 Incremental Blood Triglyceride AUC.

a- j Values with different superscripts are significantly different from each other ($p < 0.05$) according to two-way repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA)

* Statistically significant difference between groups at $p < 0.05$



Adverse effect

The severity of symptoms reported by the subjects for the 8 hours of the study is

shown in Table 5. No significant differences in symptoms were observed for any symptoms between the 2 drink groups.

Table 5 Adverse Effect During the 8-Hour Period After the Test.

Symptom	Placebo	Oolong Tea	p
Headache			
- None	27 (90.0 %)	28 (93.3 %)	0.601
- Mild	2 (6.7 %)	2 (6.7 %)	
- Moderate	1 (3.3 %)	0 (0.0 %)	
Fullness			
- None	27 (90.0 %)	26 (86.7 %)	0.688
- Mild	3 (10.0 %)	4 (13.3 %)	
- Moderate	0 (0.0 %)	0 (0.0 %)	
Itching			
- None	29 (96.7 %)	30 (100.0 %)	0.313
- Mild	1 (3.3 %)	0 (0.0 %)	
- Moderate	0 (0.0 %)	0 (0.0 %)	
Incomplete evacuation			
- None	29 (96.7 %)	28 (93.3 %)	0.601
- Mild	1 (3.3 %)	1 (3.3 %)	
- Moderate	0 (0.0 %)	1 (3.3 %)	
Nausea			
- None	29 (96.7 %)	29 (96.7 %)	1.000
- Mild	1 (3.3 %)	1 (3.3 %)	
- Moderate	0 (0.0 %)	0 (0.0 %)	
Excessive rectal gas			
- None	27 (90.0 %)	26 (86.7 %)	0.688
- Mild	3 (10.0 %)	4 (13.3 %)	
- Moderate	0 (0.0 %)	0 (0.0 %)	
Fatigue			
- None	26 (86.7 %)	28 (93.3 %)	0.389
- Mild	4 (13.3 %)	2 (6.7 %)	
- Moderate	0 (0.0 %)	0 (0.0 %)	
Bloating			
- None	28 (93.3 %)	28 (93.3 %)	0.513
- Mild	1 (3.3 %)	2 (6.7 %)	
- Moderate	1 (3.3 %)	0 (0.0 %)	
Abdominal pain			
- None	28 (93.3 %)	29 (96.7 %)	0.554
- Mild	2 (6.7 %)	1 (3.3 %)	
- Moderate	0 (0.0 %)	0 (0.0 %)	

No statistically significant difference between groups (Pearson Chi-Square)

Discussion

In this study, we determined the extent to which OTPP decreased the postprandial elevation in serum triglyceride after fat intake by blocking fat absorption. We demonstrated that oolong tea reduced the incremental blood triglyceride at 1-5 h after fat-meal consumption.

Results are consistent with previous findings, Toyoda-Ono et al.¹² found suppressive effect of OTPP on postprandial triglyceride after high-fat diet loading in rats and mice. Moreover, Nakai et al.¹³ showed that OTPP suppressed both lymphatic triglyceride absorption and serum triglyceride elevation under a high fat diet condition. Further, Hara et al.¹⁴ found that OTPP plays a key role in the suppression by oolong tea of postprandial blood triglyceride, in a randomized double-blind placebo-control cross-over study using OTPP-enriched oolong tea beverage. The study was conducted on 22 subjects with mild hyperlipidemia. The AUC of serum triglyceride significantly decreased.

Possible mechanism of action by which OTPP suppresses elevation of postprandial triglyceride after fat meal is by blocking fat absorption. Nakai et al.¹¹ found that OTPP could interfere with fat absorption via the inhibition of lipase activity *in vitro*. Also, Han et al.⁴ reported that oolong tea prevented obesity induced by feeding a high-fat diet

by inhibiting pancreatic lipase activity. In a clinical study, Hsu et al.¹⁰ determined that polyphenol-enriched oolong tea increased lipid excretion into the feces when subjects took a high fat diet. These findings indicated that oolong tea inhibited dietary fat absorption in intestinal by inhibiting pancreatic lipase activity.

Based on our result and previously published data, we propose the following scenario by which OTPP decreases postprandial triglyceride after dietary fat intake. The drinks containing OTPP could inhibit lipase activity resulting in block fat absorption causing increased fecal lipid excretion and decreased postprandial triglyceride.

Our findings suggest that ingestion of oolong tea with food is beneficial in preventing obesity and for weight management. However, we recommend drinking oolong tea without sugar so that it will not increase calorie intake and contributes to a healthy diet¹⁵, which with regular exercise can contribute to permanent weight control.

Conclusion

The oolong tea containing major bioactive compound, OTPP can decrease postprandial blood triglyceride after fat intake by blocking fat absorption, suggesting that oolong tea may be a promising anti-obesity agent for weight control.

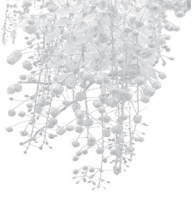


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ผลของการบริโภคชาอู่หลงต่อระดับไตรกลีเซอไรด์ในเลือดหลังอาหาร: การศึกษาวิจัยแบบสุ่มชนิดปกปิดสองด้านมีกลุ่มควบคุมและสลับลุ่ม

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บทคัดย่อ

ชาอู่หลง คือ ชาที่ผ่านกระบวนการแปรรูปแบบ กึ่งหมักจากใบชาสด ซึ่งมีสารออกฤทธิ์ทางชีวภาพหลัก ได้แก่ อู่หลงที โพลีเมอไรซ์ โพลีฟีนอล หรือ โอทีพีพี การศึกษาวิจัยก่อนหน้านี้พบว่า ชาอู่หลงสามารถลด การดูดซึมไขมันได้โดยยับยั้งเอนไซม์ไลเปส ทำให้เพิ่ม การขับไขมันออกทางอุจจาระ การศึกษาวิจัยครั้งนี้ จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์ เพื่อศึกษาผลของการดื่มชาอู่หลง ต่อระดับไตรกลีเซอไรด์ในเลือดหลังอาหาร โดยมีรูปแบบ การศึกษาเป็นแบบสุ่มชนิดปกปิดสองด้านมีกลุ่ม ควบคุมและสลับลุ่ม (randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled crossover study) ผู้เข้าร่วม วิจัยถูกแบ่งออกเป็น 2 กลุ่ม คือ กลุ่มชาอู่หลง จำนวน 15 คน และกลุ่มชาหลอก จำนวน 15 คน โดยผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัยดื่มชาอู่หลง (มีโอทีพีพี 70 มก.) หรือ ชาหลอก (มีโอทีพีพี 0 มก.) ปริมาณ 500 มล. และชุปข้าวโพด (มีปริมาณไขมัน 40 กรัม) ผู้เข้าร่วม วิจัยถูกเก็บตัวอย่างเลือดก่อน-หลังดื่มชาอู่หลง หรือชาหลอก และชุปข้าวโพด ที่เวลา 1, 2, 3, 4,

5 ชม. ผลการศึกษาพบว่า ชาอู่หลงสามารถลดระดับ ไตรกลีเซอไรด์ในเลือดหลังการบริโภคชุปข้าวโพดที่มี ไขมันสูงได้อย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ นอกจากนี้ยัง พบว่า พื้นที่ใต้กราฟของระดับไตรกลีเซอไรด์ในกลุ่ม ที่ดื่มชาอู่หลงลดลงอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ เมื่อ เปรียบเทียบกับชาหลอก และไม่พบความแตกต่าง ของอาการหรือผลข้างเคียงระหว่างกลุ่มที่ดื่มชาอู่หลง และชาหลอก จากการศึกษาครั้งนี้จึงสรุปได้ว่า การดื่ม ชาอู่หลงที่มีสารโอทีพีพี 70 มก. สามารถยับยั้ง การดูดซึมไขมัน ทำให้ระดับไตรกลีเซอไรด์ในเลือด หลังบริโภคอาหารที่มีไขมันสูงลดลงได้ ดังนั้นการดื่ม ชาอู่หลงจึงอาจเป็นทางเลือกหนึ่งที่ใช้สำหรับป้องกัน โรคอ้วน หรือช่วยควบคุมน้ำหนักตัวได้ อย่างไรก็ตาม เราควรเลือกดื่มชาอู่หลงที่ปราศจากน้ำตาลร่วมกับ การควบคุมอาหารและออกกำลังกายเป็นประจำ เพื่อการควบคุมน้ำหนักตัวได้อย่างถาวร

คำสำคัญ: ชาอู่หลง, โอทีพีพี, การดูดซึมไขมัน, ไตรกลีเซอไรด์