

Clear Liquid Diet

Purpose

A diet of clear liquids maintains vital body fluids, salts, and minerals; and also gives some energy for patients when normal food intake must be interrupted. Clear liquids are easily absorbed by the body. They reduce stimulation of the digestive system, and leave no residue in the intestinal tract. This is why a clear liquid diet is often prescribed in preparation for surgery, and is generally the first diet given by mouth after surgery. Clear liquids are given when a person has been without food by mouth (NPO) for a long time. This diet is also used in preparation for medical tests such as sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy, or certain x-rays.

Nutrition Facts

A clear liquid diet is not adequate in calories and nutrients. It should not be used for more than five days unless high-protein gelatin or other low-residue supplements are added.

Special Considerations

1. **Limitations**
The physician may limit certain liquids, depending on the patient's condition, or the surgery or test being performed. Therefore, individual instructions should be strictly followed.
2. **What is a clear liquid?**
A good rule-of-thumb is anything you can see through. For example, apple juice is a clear liquid; milk is not. If unsure, check with the physician or registered dietitian.
3. **After surgery and fasting**
Should persistent abdominal cramps or discomfort occur with a clear liquid diet, the patient should notify the physician, nurse, or dietitian at once.
4. **Preparing for a medical test**
It is important that the clear liquid diet be followed exactly. Remember that the value of the examination will depend on getting a thoroughly clean digestive tract.

Food Groups

Group	Recommend	Avoid
Milk & milk products	none	all
Vegetables	none	all
Fruits	fruit juices without pulp	nectars; all fresh, canned, and frozen fruits

Breads & grains	none	all
Meat or meat substitutes	none	all
Fats & oils	none	all
Sweets & desserts	gelatin, fruit ice, popsicle without pulp, clear hard candy	all others
Beverages	coffee; tea; soft drinks; water; lactose-free, low residue supplements if approved by physician	all others
Soups	bouillon, consommé fat free broth	all others

Sample Menu

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strained fruit juice <i>1 cup</i> • gelatin <i>1 cup</i> • hot tea with sugar & lemon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consommé <i>3/4 cup</i> • strained fruit juice <i>1 cup</i> • fruit ice <i>1/2 cup</i> • gelatin <i>1/2 cup</i> • hot tea with sugar & lemon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consommé <i>3/4 cup</i> • strained fruit juice <i>1 cup</i> • fruit ice <i>1/2 cup</i> • gelatin <i>1/2 cup</i> • hot tea with sugar & lemon

This Sample Diet Provides the Following

Calories	600	Fat	virtually none
Protein	6 gm	Sodium	1500 mg
Carbohydrates	209 gm	Potassium	1440 mg