



Clear Liquid Diet

Your health care provider has asked you to follow a clear liquid diet. You may need to do this before or after certain procedures, tests or surgeries. Or you may need to do this when you have certain illnesses. This is an overview of a clear liquid diet. If you have questions about this information or your diet, please talk with your health care provider.

What is a clear liquid diet?

Clear food and liquids are just that: clear. They may be colored, but you can see through them. Foods that are partly liquid at room temperature also can be considered liquids. Examples are gelatin and frozen fruit juice pops.

Why do I need to follow this diet?

You may need a clear liquid diet for many reasons.

- For some tests, procedures and surgeries to work best, your stomach or intestines must be empty.
- Following this diet for a short time lets your digestive system rest and recover from problems such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- Some kinds of anesthesia can affect your stomach and intestines. Clear foods and liquids are easier to digest until your digestive system starts to work normally again.

What can I eat and drink?

Unless you are told something else, you may have the following:

- Carbonated drinks such as sodas, including dark drinks like cola and root beer.
- Clear, noncarbonated soft drinks or sports drinks
- Clear broth or bouillon with no fat, such as chicken.
- Coffee and tea with no milk or cream.
- Fruit juice without pulp such as apple, white grape or cranberry.
- Water that is plain, carbonated or flavored.

- Frozen fruit juice pops without pieces of fruit, seeds or pulp.
- Gelatin.
- Hard candy and suckers.
- Honey.
- Sugar.

What foods and drinks should I avoid?

Do not eat or drink anything that is not on the list above. For example, do not drink juice or nectar that contains pulp, such as tomato, orange or prune juice. Some foods may seem clear, such as some gummy candies. However, they contain wax and other ingredients.

For certain tests, such as colonoscopy, you may be asked not to eat or drink anything that is red in color. If you get other diet instructions, be sure to follow them.

How much liquid should I drink?

Ask your health care provider how much liquid is best for you. Typically, adults and most children should drink eight 8-ounce cups of liquid a day.

Is this diet safe if I have diabetes?

A clear liquid diet can be safe for people who have diabetes. However, you may need to follow special instructions. For example, you may need to make other diet changes. Or you may need changes to the medicines you take for diabetes. Talk with the health care provider who manages your diabetes. Follow all instructions he or she gives you.

How long should I follow this diet?

This diet is only safe to use as you are told. You may use it to get ready for or recover from certain tests, procedures or surgeries. Or you may use it to recover from short-term nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. It does not give you enough calories or nutrients to meet daily needs of most adults or children. Unless you are told something else, do not follow this diet for more than three days.

How should I go back to my usual diet?

In most cases, if you are on a clear liquid diet before a procedure or test, you may go back to your usual diet as you feel able.

If you are on a clear liquid diet before or after surgery or for an illness, you may need to return slowly to other liquids and solid foods. Talk with your health care provider about when and how to return to your usual diet.

Other instructions

This material is for your education and information only. This content does not replace medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. New medical research may change this information. If you have questions about a medical condition, always talk with your health care provider.