

Clear liquid diet

A clear liquid diet consists of clear liquids — such as water, broth and plain gelatin — that are easily digested and leave no undigested residue in your intestinal tract. Your doctor may prescribe a clear liquid diet before certain medical procedures or if you have certain digestive problems. Because a clear liquid diet can't provide you with adequate calories and nutrients, it shouldn't be continued for more than a few days.

Clear liquids and foods may be colored so long as you are able to see through them. Foods can be considered liquid if they are even partly liquid at room temperature. You can't eat solid food while on a clear liquid diet.

Purpose

A clear liquid diet is often used before tests, procedures or surgeries that require no food in your stomach or intestines, such as before colonoscopy. It may also be recommended as a short-term diet if you have certain digestive problems, such as nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, or after certain types of surgery.

Diet details

A clear liquid diet helps maintain adequate hydration, provides some important electrolytes, such as sodium and potassium, and gives some energy at a time when a full diet isn't possible or recommended.

The following foods are allowed in a clear liquid diet:

- Water (plain, carbonated or flavored)
- Fruit juices without pulp, such as apple or white grape
- Fruit-flavored beverages, such as fruit punch or lemonade
- Carbonated drinks, including dark sodas (cola and root beer)
- Gelatin
- Tea or coffee without milk or cream
- Strained tomato or vegetable juice
- Sports drinks
- Clear, fat-free broth (bouillon or consommé)
- Honey or sugar
- Hard candy, such as lemon drops or peppermint rounds
- Ice pops without milk, bits of fruit, seeds or nuts

Any foods not on the above list should be avoided. Also, for certain tests, such as colon exams, your doctor may ask you to avoid liquids or gelatin with red coloring.

A typical menu on the clear liquid diet may look like this.

Breakfast

- 1 glass pulp-free fruit juice
- 1 bowl gelatin
- 1 cup of coffee or tea, without dairy products
- Sugar or honey, if desired

Snack

- 1 glass fruit juice (pulp-free)
- 1 bowl gelatin

Lunch

- 1 glass pulp-free fruit juice
- 1 glass water
- 1 cup broth
- 1 bowl gelatin

Snack

- 1 pulp-free ice pop
- 1 cup coffee or tea, without dairy products, or a soft drink
- Sugar or honey if desired

Dinner

- 1 cup pulp-free juice or water
- 1 cup broth
- 1 bowl gelatin
- 1 cup coffee or tea, without dairy products
- Sugar or honey, if desired