Clear Liquid Diet

The Clear Liquid Diet (CLD) is restricted to:

- Those foods that are liquid or will become liquid at body temperature.
- Liquids that leave little or no residue and that may be absorbed easily with a minimum of digestive activity.

Because the Clear Liquid Diet is so restrictive (see Adequacy below), it does not meet the Recommended Dietary Allowances of the National Research Council. The CLD provides some electrolytes (*salts in the blood*), mainly sodium and potassium, and a limited number of calories. Kilocalories are primarily from carbohydrates, even though the recommended foods provide minimal amounts of protein and fat.

A high protein, low residue, or no residue supplement should be used to meet an individual's nutritional requirements when the CLD is continued for more than 2 to 3 days. In a malnourished patient, supplements should be started right away.

A Surgical Clear Liquid Diet is similar to the CLD. The exceptions are the avoidance of any fruit juices and any red gelatin, fruit ice, etc. Low residue supplements are also omitted.

INDICATIONS FOR USE

- In acute (*sudden*) conditions for the presurgical and/or postsurgical patient.
- As the first step in oral feeding.
- For fluid and electrolyte replacement in diarrheal diseases.
- As a test diet.

ADEQUACY

The CLD is adequate only in ascorbic acid, according to the Recommended Dietary Allowances of the National Research Council.

SPECIAL NOTES

This diet is very restrictive. It provides some electrolytes and a small amount of calories. Use should be limited to very short periods, and only under the advice or supervision of your caregiver or dietitian.

- **Food Group:** Breads/Starches.
- **Allowed/Recommended:** None are allowed.
- **Avoid/Use Sparingly:** All are avoided.

- **Food Group:** Vegetables.
- **Allowed/Recommended:** Strained tomato or vegetable juice.
- **Avoid/Use Sparingly:** Any others.

- **Food Group:** Fruit.
- **Allowed/Recommended:** Strained fruit juices and fruit drinks. Include 1 serving of citrus, or include 1 serving of citrus or vitamin C-enriched fruit juice daily.
- **Avoid/Use Sparingly:** Any others.

- **Food Group:** Meat and Meat Substitutes.
- **Allowed/Recommended:** None are allowed.
- **Avoid/Use Sparingly:** All are avoided.

- **Food Group:** Milk.
- **Allowed/Recommended:** None are allowed.

- **Avoid/Use Sparingly:** All are avoided.

- **Food Group:** Soups and Combination Foods.
- **Allowed/Recommended:** Clear bouillon, broth, or strained, broth-based soups.
- **Avoid/Use Sparingly:** Any others.

- **Food Group:** Desserts and Sweets.
- **Allowed/Recommended:** Flavored gelatin, ices, or frozen ice pops that do not contain milk. Sugar, honey. High protein gelatin.
- **Avoid/Use Sparingly:** Any others.

- **Food Group:** Fats and Oils.
- **Allowed/Recommended:** None are allowed.
- **Avoid/Use Sparingly:** All are avoided.

- **Food Group:** Beverages.
- **Allowed/Recommended:** Carbonated beverages, cereal beverages, coffee (regular or decaffeinated), tea.
- **Avoid/Use Sparingly:** Any others.

- **Food Group:** Condiments.
- **Allowed/Recommended:** Iodized salt.
- **Avoid/Use Sparingly:** Any others, including pepper.

- **Food Group:** Supplements.
- **Allowed/Recommended:** Liquid nutrition beverages.
- **Avoid/Use Sparingly:** Any others that contain lactose (*a sugar in dairy products*), residue, or are not palatable orally.

* Use of supplements on a Clear Liquid Diet is controversial. Policies for their use are decided by each institution or according to individual circumstances. A sample meal plan for the CLD is available from your dietitian.

SAMPLE MEAL PLAN*

Breakfast

4 oz. strained orange juice.
1/2-1 cup gelatin (plain or fortified).
1 cup beverage (coffee or tea).
Sugar if desired.

Midmorning Snack

1/2 cup gelatin (plain or fortified).

Noon Meal

1 cup broth or consommé.
4 oz. strained grapefruit juice.
1/2 cup gelatin (plain or fortified).
1 cup beverage (coffee or tea).
Sugar if desired.

Midafternoon Snack

1/2 cup fruit ice and/or 1/2 cup strained fruit juice.

Evening Meal

1 cup broth or consommé.
1/2 cup cranberry juice.
1/2 cup flavored gelatin (plain or fortified).
1 cup beverage (coffee or tea).
Sugar if desired.

Evening Snack

4 oz. strained apple juice (vitamin C-fortified).
1/2 cup flavored gelatin (plain or fortified).

* The above sample meal plan cannot meet the Recommended Dietary Allowances of the National Research Council, except for vitamin C.

Document Released: 12/18/2006 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.