

Fat free diet for a chyle leak

What is a chyle leak?

Chyle is milky-looking fluid made in your small intestine during the digestion of fat. Chyle is carried around the body by lymphatic vessels, just like blood is carried around the body by blood vessels. The lymphatic system carries fluid, fats, protein and cells that fight infection.

A leak can occur in the lymphatic system after surgery. This is called a chyle leak.

Follow a fat free diet

Following a fat free diet will help heal your chyle leak. This is a temporary diet. Most people only need to stay on this diet for a couple of weeks. Talk to your dietitian about when you can start eating foods with fat again.

Do not follow this diet for more than 2 weeks, as it does not provide enough fat for good health.

What is “fat free”?

In Canada, a food product can be called “fat free” or “zero fat” if it has less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving. Therefore, some foods that have “fat free” on their label may actually have a small amount of fat. This is safe. Eat as little fat as possible until your chyle leak heals.

Label reading tips

It is important to read the nutrition labels on all foods. This will help you decide what foods you can eat. Look at the “Fat” section. If the food has 0 grams of fat, then this food is allowed in your diet.

Example Nutrition Facts Label

This is the nutrition information of a fat free yogurt.

Nutrition Facts	
Per 100g	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 35	
Fat 0 g	0%
Saturated 0 g + Trans 0 g	0%
Cholesterol 0 mg	0%
Sodium 50 mg	2%
Carbohydrate 5 g	2%
Fibre 0 g	0%
Sugars 4 g	
Protein 4 g	
Vitamin A	6%
Vitamin C	0%
Calcium	10%
Iron	0%

This yogurt would be allowed on the chyle leak diet. It contains 0 grams of fat.

Food recommendations

Remember to always read the nutrition facts label. The fat level of foods can vary between different products and brand names. If you have questions, ask your dietitian.

	Foods to Eat	Foods to Avoid
Breads, Cereals, and Starches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fat free breads • Fat free cereals (Rice Krispies®, Corn Pops®, Corn Flakes®, Frosted Flakes®, Special K®) • Rice cakes, white rice, udon noodles • Air-popped popcorn (plain) • Potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams • Fat free muffins, cookies, crackers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breads and cereals with fat, seeds, or nuts • Pasta, brown rice • Oats, granola • Muffins, waffles, pancakes • Pita, bagels • Potato chips, pretzels • Microwave popcorn
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most fresh, frozen, and canned fruits • Raisins and dried fruits • Applesauce and other fruit sauces • Fruit juice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit pie filling • Avocado • Olives
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most fresh, frozen and canned vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetables with added fat • Fried vegetables • Canned tomato sauces
Meats and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egg whites and fat free liquid egg products • Fat free luncheon meats • Beans (chickpeas, kidney, black, lentils, pinto) cooked with no added fat – up to ½ cup each day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole eggs, egg yolk • Meats (beef, chicken, fish) • Nuts and seeds • Peanut butter and other nut butters • Edamame/soybeans
Milk, Dairy, and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skim milk (non-fat milk) • Skim milk powder • Fat free chocolate skim milk • Fat free yogurt and cheese • Fat free soy milk • Fat free hot chocolate mix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1%, 2%, or homo milk • Regular chocolate milk • Regular yogurt and cheese • Regular soy milk • Almond and rice milk • Eggnog • Cream

	Foods to Eat	Foods to Avoid
Fats, Condiments, and Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fat free salad dressings • Fat free mayonnaise • Fat free sour cream • Salt, pepper, herbs and spices • Jams, jellies, honey, syrup • Fat free broths and soups • Ketchup, fat free mustard • Sugar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular salad dressings • Low fat or regular mayonnaise • Butter • Margarine • Lard • Gravy • Vegetable oils • Coconut
Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit juices, lemonade, soft drinks • Gatorade®, sports drinks • Tea, coffee • Water (plain or flavoured) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialty coffee drinks • Tea or coffee with cream
Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fat free pudding • Fat free whipped topping • Hard candy, chewing gum • Jell-O • Marshmallows • Fat free popsicles, sorbet, frozen fruit bars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular pudding • Cake, pie, cookies • Chocolate • Doughnuts • Ice cream, frozen yogurt, Fudgsicles® • Milkshakes
Supplements (ask your dietitian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multivitamin/mineral supplement • Boost® Fruit Beverage* • Medium-chain triglyceride (MCT) oils • Fat free protein supplements (i.e. RESOURCE® Beneprotein*) • Carnation® Instant Breakfast® powder (vanilla and strawberry flavours only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure® • Glucerna® • Boost® • Carnation® Instant Breakfast® powder (chocolate) • Ready-to-Drink Carnation® Breakfast • Generic brand supplement drinks

* Boost Fruit Beverage and RESOURCE Beneprotein can be ordered at your local pharmacy. Talk to your dietitian or pharmacist about how to order these products.

Fat free meal ideas and recipes

Breakfast ideas

- Fat free cereals (i.e. Rice Krispies®, Corn Flakes®, Corn Pops®, Special K®) with skim milk or fat free soy milk
- Top your cereal with fresh fruit
- Toast (fat free bread) with jam/jelly
- Chopped fruit mixed in fat free yogurt
- Egg white omelette – use a non-stick pan and beat liquid egg whites with fat free ham and minced vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers or mushrooms
- Use a blender to make a fat free smoothie:
 - 1 cup frozen or fresh fruit
 - 1 small banana (optional)
 - 1/2 cup fat free yogurt or sorbet
 - 1/2 cup skim milk, fat free soy milk or juice
 - You may choose to add a tablespoon of honey or sugar for extra sweetness
 - You can try adding skim milk powder or protein powder to make this a high-protein smoothie
 - You can try adding cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, ginger or vanilla extract for extra flavour
- Drink tea or coffee (black or with sugar and/or skim milk)
- Drink skim milk, fat free soy milk, fat free chocolate milk or fruit juice

Lunch ideas

- Try a deli sandwich – use fat free luncheon meat, fat free bread, vegetables (lettuce, tomatoes or cucumbers) and condiments like fat free mayonnaise, fat free mustard, salt and pepper
 - Make a salad with a fat free dressing – use ½ cup of beans or chickpeas with your favourite vegetables (lettuce, spinach, peppers, tomatoes)
 - Add fresh berries or dried fruits for more variety
 - Drink skim milk, fat free chocolate milk, or fat free soy milk for extra protein
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Dinner ideas

- Boil or bake a potato or yam. Add fat free sour cream and green onions on top.
- Cook vegetables with lemon juice, minced garlic or ginger for more flavour.
- Get extra protein with egg whites, fat free luncheon meats, beans, and fat free milk.

If you cannot find fat free canned soups, trying making your own:

Chunky Southwest Vegetable Soup:

- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 cup chopped onions
- 1 cup chopped mushrooms
- ½ cup chopped green bell pepper
- 1 tbsp minced jalapeno pepper OR chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1 can (19 oz/540 mL) diced tomatoes

Directions:

In a large saucepan, over medium heat, combine celery, onion, mushrooms, green pepper, jalapeno/parsley and chili powder. Add tomatoes, then fill can twice with water and add to saucepan; bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 25 minutes. Makes five 1-cup servings.

Dietitian recommendations:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Notes:

