Nutrition Guidelines for Chyle Leak

Chyle Leak
Chyle is a milky looking fluid that contains lymphatic fluid and fat. It is formed in the small intestine during digestion. Chyle is carried around the body by the lymphatic vessels of the lymphatic system. The lymphatic system carries fluid, fats, protein, and cells that fight infection around the body. A leak in the lymphatic system can occur after surgery. This is called a chyle leak.

Diet to Help Heal the Leak
If you follow a very low-fat diet, it can help heal a chyle leak. When you eat less fat, the body makes less chyle. This decreases the amount of chyle that can leak into the body which can help the leak to heal. This diet is meant only for short-term use. It should not be followed for longer than prescribed.

Diet Guidelines
Limit your daily fat intake to no more than:

ADULTS: 25 grams

CHILDREN (1-10 years): 10 grams

CHILDREN (>10 years): 15-25 grams

- The small amount of fat that is in your diet should be spread throughout the day – not all at one meal.
- Read food labels to check the total fat content and serving size of food items.
- Protein intake is very important. Choose low fat, high protein foods and consider nutrition supplement drinks or protein powders to meet your needs.
- Talk with your dietitian about taking a daily multivitamin with minerals while you are on this diet.

Foods to Eat

Fruits
- Fresh or canned fruits
- Dried fruits
- Fruit juice
- Jelly/jams/fruit spreads

Vegetables
- Plain fresh or frozen vegetables
- Canned vegetables
- Vegetable juice
- Pickles
- Potatoes & sweet potatoes without added fat

Breads/Cereals/Grains
- Fat free breads, bagels, and crackers
- Fat free cereals (no nuts)
- Fat free pasta and rice
- Air popped popcorn
- Fat free muffins

Dairy
- Skim milk, skim milk powder
- Fat free cheese and cottage cheese
- Fat free sour cream and cream cheese
- Fat free yogurt and frozen yogurt

Meats and Meat Substitutes
- Fat free lunch meat/deli meat
- Fat free hot dogs
- Fat free egg substitute or Egg Beaters®, egg whites
- Fat free veggie burgers

- White poultry meat without the skin and trimmed of any fat
- Lean fish such as cod, perch, halibut, tilapia
- Beans (black, pinto, kidney, white, lima) and lentils prepared without added fat
- Fat free refried beans

Condiments
- Fat free salad dressings and mayo
- Ketchup, BBQ sauce, mustard, soy sauce, and hot sauce
- Fat free salsa, relish
- Syrup

Soups
- Fat free broth
- Soups made with fat free broth, skim milk, or evaporated skim milk

Fats
- Fat free creamers
- Fat free whipping cream/Cool Whip®

Drinks
- Decaf or regular coffee or tea
- Water
- Carbonated drinks
- Juice or lemonade
- Sports drinks such as Powerade® or Gatorade®

Nutrition Drinks
- Carnation® Breakfast Essentials powder mixed with skim milk
- Ensure® Clear
- Boost® Breeze
- Ensure® Max Protein
- Whey protein powders

Desserts
- Fat free pudding
- Popsicles
- Nonfat frozen yogurt
- Fat free sherbet or ice cream
- Fat free desserts
- Gelatin

Foods not to Eat

Fruits
- Canned pie fillings
- Coconut
- Avocado

Vegetables
- Olives
- Vegetables in sauce made with butter, cream, or cheese
- Vegetables canned in oil

Breads/Cereals/Grains
- Breads or cereals that contain fat
- Bread or cereals with added fat such as cream, butter, peanut butter
- Microwave or stovetop popcorn made with oil

Dairy
- Low-fat or full fat dairy products
- Creamers that contain fat

Meats and Meat Substitutes
- Whole eggs
- Nuts and seeds
- Peanut butter or other kinds of nut butter
- Soybeans/edamame
- Fatty fish such as salmon
- Dark poultry meat
- Fatty cuts of meat

Condiments
- Low fat or regular mayo and salad dressings

Soups
- Cream soups

Fats

- Butter, margarine, cream
- Lard
- Vegetable oils

Drinks

- Specialty coffee drinks
- Tea or coffee with cream
- Shakes or smoothies that contain fat

Nutrition Drinks

- Ensure® Plus, Ensure® Original, Ensure® High Protein, Ensure® Complete Boost
- Glucerna®
- Boost®
- Carnation® Breakfast Essentials Ready to drink drinks
- Generic or store brand nutrition supplement drinks

Desserts

- Chocolate
- Pudding
- Cookies, cake, pie, doughnuts
- Ice cream, frozen yogurt
- Milkshakes

Who to Call

If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan.

For a list of UW Health Clinics, please visit www.uwhealth.org/.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 8/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#536