

Low-fat Diet

For chyle leak or retroperitoneal lymph node dissection (RPLND)

You may need to follow a low-fat diet after some procedures or during some treatments. While following a low-fat diet, it is important that you eat enough nutritious food to prevent weight loss. A registered dietitian can support you as you make these dietary changes.

Why do I need to follow a low-fat diet?

You need to follow a low-fat diet if:

- ☐ You have had a retroperitoneal lymph node dissection (RPLND).
- ☐ You have a chyle leak.

What do I need to know about low-fat diets?

- Low-fat diets help prevent your *lymphatic system* from absorbing fat. The lymphatic system balances the fluids in your body. It is part of the immune system.
- After an RPLND, it is important to prevent the risk of a *chyle leak*. Chyle is a fluid that contains fat. Chyle travels through your lymphatic system as part of the fat absorption process. During a chyle leak, this fluid can enter other areas of the body, causing swelling, fluid build-up, and other issues.
- Eating a low-fat diet can help prevent a chyle leak from happening.
- Please tell your registered dietitian (RD) if you are on a low-fat diet for more than 3 to 4 weeks and are experiencing weight loss.

Eating After an RPLND or During a Chyle Leak

After an RPLND, you will need to:

- Follow a diet of 20 to 30 grams of fat per day for 30 days after your operation to prevent a chyle leak.

If you have a chyle leak, you will need to:

- Follow a low-fat diet until your doctor tells you that your chyle leak is resolved.
- This low-fat diet will include less than 20 grams of fat per day.

General Guidelines

- Read food labels to check the fat content of foods (see the section on food labels below).
- Prioritize “fat-free” foods. These are foods that have a total amount of 0 to 0.5 grams of fat per serving.
- Try to spread out your fat intake throughout the day. Make sure most of your daily fat is not coming from a single meal.
- Avoid foods that are high in fat (see table on page 3).
- Eat regularly to make sure you are getting enough nutrition.

MCT Oil

- *Medium-chain triglycerides* (MCT) are a type of fat that are usually not absorbed by the lymphatic system if eaten in small amounts. If you eat large amounts of MCTs, they may be absorbed through the lymphatic system.
- **Only use MCT oil if you cannot get enough calories in your diet from food alone.** Your RD can help you make this decision.
- Start by taking 1 tablespoon (5mL) once a day. Every 3 days, add 1 more tablespoon. Keep increasing in this way until you are taking 3 tablespoons a day. You do not have to take all 3 tablespoons at once.
- Stop increasing the amount of MCT oil you take if you experience diarrhea or nausea. Do not take more than 4 to 6 tablespoons a day.
- You can add MCT oil to fat-free beverages such as water, Gatorade, fruit juice, soda, skim milk, and black coffee.
- You can also add MCT oil to fat-free hot cereal, mashed potatoes, vegetables, pasta, soups, salad dressings, or applesauce.



Nutrition Facts	
Serving size 3/4 cup (170g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories	130
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 15mg	4%
Sodium 95mg	4%
Total Carbohydrate 17g	6%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Total Sugars 8g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 14g	

This example of a food label shows where to look for the serving size and amount of fat in a serving.

Nutrition Facts Labels

- Nutrition Facts labels can help you manage your low-fat diet.
- Products labeled “fat-free” contain 0 to 0.5 grams of fat per serving.
- Products labeled “low-fat” contain 3 grams of fat or less per serving.
- Always check the serving size on the Nutrition Facts label. The arrows on the image to the left show where to look for serving size and total fat content per serving.
- Remember that if you plan to eat 2 servings, that means you will eat 2 times the amount of fat listed on the Nutrition Facts label.

Foods to Eat and Foods to Avoid

Food Groups	OK to Eat	Do NOT Eat
Dairy 	• Fat-free dairy products such as fat-free yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese, milk, sour cream, cream cheese, or creamer • Skim milk • Fat-free Carnation Instant Breakfast mixed with skim milk	• Low-fat or full-fat dairy products
Meats and Proteins 	• Skinless, white poultry (such as white chicken or turkey meat) with the fat trimmed off • Lean fish (cod, perch, halibut) • Light tuna canned in water • Egg whites or egg substitutes • Fat-free lunch meat • Fat-free hot dogs • Fat-free veggie burgers • Boiled or canned beans without added fat (black, pinto, kidney, white, lima)	• Red meat • Dark poultry meat • Poultry skin • Fatty fish such as salmon • Whole eggs and egg yolks • Fried meats of any kind • Meats cooked in any type of fat or oil • All nuts • All nut butters, including peanut butter
Fruits 	• Fresh, frozen, or canned fruits • Fruit juice • Jams and jellies • Dried fruits such as raisins	• Avocados • Coconuts
Vegetables 	• Fresh or frozen vegetables • Vegetable juices, such as tomato juice • Fat-free tomato sauce or paste • Pickles	• Olives • Vegetables canned in oil • Fried vegetables • Vegetables cooked in oil, butter, or any type of fat • Vegetables with cream or cheese sauces

Food Groups	OK to Eat	Do NOT Eat
Bread, Grain, Cereal Products 	• Fat-free bread or bagels • Fat-free pasta • Rice • Fat-free crackers • Fat-free cereals • Fat-free muffins • White potatoes • Sweet potatoes • Plain popcorn	• Breads or cereals that contain nuts • Bread topped with oil or butter • Cereals with fats or nuts • Popcorn with butter or added fat
Beverages 	• Black coffee • Coffee with fat-free creamer • Tea • Carbonated drinks, such as soda or sparkling water • Fruit juices • Sports drinks such as Gatorade • Fat-free, high-protein supplement drinks (such as Ensure Clear)	• Coffee or tea with added cream • Beverages that contain fat, such as Ensure Plus and full-fat or low-fat milk or chocolate milk.
Fats 	• Fat-free salad dressing • Fat-free mayonnaise	• Regular salad dressings • Mayonnaise • Sandwich spreads • Cream sauces • Gravy • All vegetable oils, including olive oil • Butter • Lard • Cream
Soups 	• Fat-free broth • Soups made with fat-free or skim milk	• Soups with cream, milk, butter, or cheese

Food Groups	OK to Eat	Do NOT Eat
Other 	• Ketchup • Yellow mustard • Hot sauce • Honey • Maple syrup • Soy sauce • Fat-free salsa • Sugar • Herbs and spices	• Buffalo sauce • Any sauces or condiments made with oil, cream, butter, mayonnaise, or other forms of fat • Pasta sauces with olive oil
Desserts 	• Fruit • Hard mints • Jelly beans • Licorice • Fat-free frozen yogurt • Fat-free ice cream • Fat-free cookies • Fat-free fruit-flavored desserts such as popsicles or sorbet	• Pastries or cakes • Doughnuts • Chocolate

One-day Sample Menu

Breakfast • 1/3 cup blueberries • 1/3 cup oatmeal • 1 cup skim milk OR • 1 fat-free bagel • 2 tablespoons fat-free cream cheese	Dinner Brown rice and chicken bowl: • 1/3 cup brown rice • 2 ounces steamed skinless chicken breast with salt and pepper • 1/2 cup black beans • Roasted red bell peppers • Fat-free pico de gallo or salsa • Fat-free shredded cheese • Lime and cilantro
Lunch • Fat-free veggie burger with tomato and lettuce on a potato bun OR • Bahn mi sandwich with steamed chicken, fresh carrots, cucumber, and fat-free mayo	Snacks • Dried mango, apricots, or other fruit • Fruit smoothie made with skim milk and frozen fruit • 1 cup fat-free yogurt • 1/4 cup diced strawberries or other fresh fruit
Sides • 1 cup steamed broccoli • 1 apple, sliced	Desserts • 2 scoops fat-free ice cream OR • Fat-free popsicle made with real fruit juice

Questions?

Your questions are important. Contact your dietitian if you have questions or concerns.

Your dietitian's name and phone number:
