

FASTING BEFORE AN OPERATION

CONTENTS

01	Introduction	4
02	Fasting: what does that mean?	4
03	Why is having an empty stomach important?	4
04	Before the procedure	4
05	Taking medication	5
06	Until when can I eat and drink?	5
07	When can I eat and drink again?	7

01 INTRODUCTION

You will shortly undergo an operation under anaesthesia. For this, you need to be fasting. In this brochure, we explain why this is so important. If you have any questions after reading, please speak to the doctor or nurse.

02 FASTING: WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Generally, “fasting” may refer to the metabolic status of a person who has not eaten overnight. In the morning, “breakfast” is where this fast is broken

In a medical sense, fasting means that your stomach contains no food or drink as part of a medical procedure. When under anaesthesia, your stomach should be empty so that no stomach contents can enter your lungs when the anaesthesia (or sedation) sets in. You are unable to swallow during the anaesthetic.

From a certain time before the procedure, you should not eat or drink. How long beforehand depends on the kind of food and drink (the stomach digests some substances more slowly than others), the amount, the procedure and the kind of anaesthetic.

03 WHY IS HAVING AN EMPTY STOMACH IMPORTANT?

A general anaesthetic affects the stomach. Some functions of the stomach, such as contraction, emptying and production of secretions, are temporarily stopped during the procedure. Stomach contents and gastric juices from the stomach and the oesophagus may be brought up into your trachea and lungs if your stomach is not empty. This is dangerous and can result in a lung infection which is a serious complication. So for your own safety you should follow the instructions we give you here.

04 BEFORE THE PROCEDURE

Preoperative consultation with the anaesthetist

If we expect you in hospital for a procedure, you will go for a consultation with the anaesthetist some time before the appointed date. This is the doctor who will administer the anaesthetic. If you are admitted for an overnight stay, the anaesthetist will visit you in your room the evening before the procedure. The anaesthetist will explain the course of anaesthesia and the guidelines you should follow.

Preoperative questionnaire

The nurse gives you a preoperative questionnaire which you should fill in yourself, together with a family member or together with the nurse.

Nutritional advice

The nurse will assist you and give you nutritional advice so that you are in the best possible shape for the procedure or examination.

High-carbohydrate liquids

A good nutritional condition at the start of the operation will help prevent any postoperative complications. Drinking carbohydrate-rich, clear drinks can help. Those drinks contain sugar and significant calories and make patients feel better in the period before surgery. They may also help reduce complications after the surgery, such as changes in blood sugar levels and loss of muscle mass.

Fasting card

Before the procedure, the nurse will hang a 'fasting card' on your bed. This states the time up to when you can eat and drink. This time was determined together with the anaesthetist.

05 TAKING MEDICATION

The doctor will tell you what medicines you may continue to take or must take on the day of the procedure. You may drink a small amount of water with these. Studies show that it is safe for adult patients to take medication with half a glass of water. You should not drink more water or clear drinks prior to the anaesthetic. This increases urine production and can result in an overfull bladder during the anaesthetic.

06 UNTIL WHEN MAY I EAT AND DRINK?

To make the procedure safe, you may eat something easily digestible up to six hours before anaesthesia and drink clear liquids up to two hours before the procedure. After those times, it is no longer allowed.

Eating

Do not eat fried food or high-fat meat from 8 hours before the procedure.

Drinking

Research shows that it is safe to drink clear drinks up to two hours before the procedure under anaesthesia. This will not endanger your health during the surgery. Clear drinks leave the stomach within two hours.

In addition to water and tea, clear drinks include: coffee without milk, diluted syrups, clear fruit juices (without pulp), apple juice, Coca-Cola, Aquarius®, Oasis®, Lipton Ice Tea®, AA Drink, Isostar®, Extran® herbal drinks, preoperative drinks. These drinks contain important electrolytes, minerals and carbohydrates, which is why they are preferred to water.

Guidelines for anaesthesia

We use these guidelines for anaesthesia in our hospital.

Time	You can eat or drink this
Up to six hours before the operation/ procedure	For certain operations/procedures, your treating doctor may allow you to eat a light meal consisting of toast and clear liquids.
Up to six hours before the operation/ procedure	For certain operations/procedures, your treating doctor may allow you to drink milk (excluding breast milk). Milk is similar to solids.
Up to four hours before the operation/ procedure	Subject to the agreement of the treating physician: breast milk.
Up to two hours before the operation/ procedure	Clear liquids, such as water, coffee and tea without milk, carbonated drinks (Coca-Cola) and apple juice. Aquarius®, Oasis®, Lipton Ice Tea®, AA Drink, Isostar® and Extran® herbal drink. You should not drink other fruit juices such as e.g. orange juice.

Do you have any questions? The nurse can give you more information about when the procedure or examination is scheduled and about the intake of food and fluids before surgery.

07 WHEN CAN I EAT AND DRINK AGAIN?

After surgery, you will stay temporarily in the recovery room (Post-anaesthesia care unit or PAZA). Here you can take your time to wake up. As soon as your condition permits, the nurse from the department will come and fetch you and you will return to your room. The recovery area nurse discusses with the department nurse when you can eat and drink again.

For most procedures it is sufficient that you are awake enough to be able to drink. If you are not nauseous, you are given an easily digestible snack. You can eat more again little by little.

Sometimes you may only eat once the doctor has given permission for this, e.g. with some gastrointestinal procedures or operations on other organs in the abdominal cavity and if follow-up surgery may be required.

If you are not allowed to drink, you can ask the nurse to wet your lips. You can also have an ice lolly to reduce the feeling of being thirsty.

If it is not completely clear to you what and when you can eat and drink, do not hesitate to ask the nurse. For an optimum recovery, it is important that you follow the guidelines carefully.

Nutritional team

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