

NHS Trust specific advice

After your operation

(For most, but not all operations, please check with your nurse or doctor).

When you have woken up from your anaesthetic, you will be offered a drink.

When you are hungry, you will be offered something light to eat (e.g. toast or a sandwich).

Please note:

After some operations on your gut, stomach or bowel the surgeon will decide when you should eat and drink. You may not be offered anything to drink or eat for some time depending on the type of operation and your recovery.

**Do you still have questions about fasting?
Would you like more information?**

Your healthcare team can be contacted at

FASTING BEFORE A GENERAL ANAESTHETIC



Guidance for Adults

What this leaflet is about?

This leaflet tells you about not eating or drinking (fasting) before a general anaesthetic. Fasting from food and drink is sometimes called 'nil by mouth'. This leaflet is for adults and is based on the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) guideline, '*Perioperative fasting in adults and children*'. A separate leaflet is available for children and their parents.

Why fasting is important?

Fasting is important to avoid complications during your operation, however research has found there is no increase in the risk of complications if you:

- **Fast from food for at least six hours before your operation.**
- **Drink water up to two hours before your operation.**

Research shows patients who drink water are also less thirsty than those who do not.



This leaflet tells you about fasting before and after your operation. The boxes opposite give an example of what your healthcare team might advise you to do depending on when your operation takes place. It is general guidance, which your healthcare team may change for your operation.

Please remember eating and drinking when you are supposed to be fasting can result in your operation being cancelled or delayed.

Before your operation

For all operations:

- Bring all your prescribed medication to the hospital. Tell the doctors and nurses about all the medication you are taking.
- You can have a small sip of water (two tablespoons) to help you swallow your tablets, if required, just before your operation.
- You will be given advice on what you may drink and when you should start fasting.
- Fasting from food also includes not eating sweets, chewing gum or taking milk in tea or coffee.

When you are fasting from food and drink a nurse will put a '**nil by mouth**' note by your bed.

The RCN guideline recommends that patients should be encouraged to drink water or other clear drink as close as possible to two hours before their operation.

For example:

You are third on the operating list and are expected to go to theatre for your operation at 10.00am. It will be safe for you to have unlimited amounts of water up to 8.00am. If your operation is expected to be 2.00pm then it will be safe for you to have unlimited amounts of water up to midday. Ask the nurses if you would prefer a cup of tea or coffee without milk, or another clear drink*

If there is a delay in your operation and you are given a revised time for your operation then your fasting time can be revised.

It is important to check with your healthcare professional any changes.

*A clear drink is one through which newsprint can be read