

Preparing for your child's surgery – fasting

At Monash Children's Hospital (MCH) we want your child's surgery to be as safe as possible. Before having surgery, your child will need to fast (not eat or drink) for a certain amount of time. Instructions are on the **fasting guide** which is in your hospital paperwork. If you do not follow the fasting instructions, your child's surgery might be delayed or cancelled.

Why does my child need to stop eating and drinking before surgery?

Fasting before surgery is important to lessen the risks of general anaesthetic medicine. The anaesthetic medicine relaxes the body and its muscles (including muscles around where food goes into the stomach). If there is food or drink in your child's stomach, then the relaxed muscles mean it could regurgitate back up and enter their trachea (breathing tube) and lungs. This is called 'aspiration' and can make your child very sick.

Why are there different fasting times for food and drink?

Clear fluids pass through the stomach more quickly than food, so they can be given safely closer to the anaesthesia time. Clear fluids are see-through when held up to the light. The clear fluids we recommend are water, clear cordials, and clear juices like apple juice that have no pulp.

Children less than 6 months of age	Children older than 6 months of age
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Last breastfeed must finish 3 hours before anaesthesia. Last formula feed must finish 4 hours before anaesthesia. Sterile cooled/boiled water can be given 1 hour before anaesthesia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do NOT give any food, milk drinks, lollies or chewing gum for 6 hours before anaesthesia. Sips of clear fluids can be given until coming into hospital, and 1 hour before anaesthesia.

Can my child have their regular medicines while fasting?

You should continue to give your child their usual medicines unless told otherwise by a doctor or nurse. Medicines can be taken on the day of surgery with a small sip of water.

Please contact your treating team at MCH if your child takes medicines for diabetes (e.g. insulin) or blood thinning medicines (e.g. aspirin or warfarin). These might need to be adjusted before surgery. **If your child is diabetic, you need to have a plan to manage their medicines while fasting.**

Please tell the surgical team if your child is taking ANY non-prescribed medicines, painkillers, or vitamin supplements. Some of these can cause bleeding during the operation and might need to be stopped a few days before.

After surgery

The nurses and doctors will tell you when your child can start to eat and drink after surgery. Most children can eat and drink soon after they wake up. They usually start with clear fluids or a light diet. Your child will be able to eat normally when they feel well enough, usually within 12-24 hours.

For information

- Questions regarding the surgery or fasting call elective surgery services on **1800 786 188**
- See our information sheet: *Preparing your child for surgery*
- See our information sheet: *Children's Anaesthetics- frequently asked questions*
- See our information sheet: *Reducing your child's discomfort during procedures*
- Please watch <http://monashchildrenshospital.org/patients-and-families/your-childs-surgery/before-you-arrive/>
- Questions about how to best prepare your child for surgery: call child life therapy service on **0481 904 461**.