
Fasting before an operation

**Pre-assessment Unit
Chelsea and Sutton**

Patient Information



Can I eat or drink before an operation?

You may be asked not to eat or drink (also called fasting) for a specified time before you come into hospital for your operation. This is because for general anaesthesia to be delivered safely, it is essential that you have an empty stomach.

When should I fast from?

Fasting instructions will be confirmed with you at pre-assessment or prior to admission. However, the following are usually allowed:

- **Morning list (early morning admission):** You must not have anything to eat after midnight the night before your operation. However, we would encourage that you have water before 6am.
- **Afternoon list (late morning admission):** You may have a light breakfast (see below) before 7am. You may have water before 11am.
- Once the list has been determined on the day of surgery, you may be allowed (once confirmed by the anaesthetist) to drink water until a specific time. This time will be communicated to you by the nursing staff.
- Chewing gum and sweets should not be consumed during the six hours before your operation. Please avoid

smoking as far as possible before your operation.

- Your regular medications should be taken at the normal time with a small amount of water unless you have been instructed otherwise. Please bring all your medicines with you to hospital.

What is a light meal?

- Cereals such as Rice Crispies, Cornflakes, porridge or Ready Brek with milk
- Bread or toast (white or brown) with a small amount of butter and jam or marmalade
- Scrambled egg or omelette
- Fish or chicken with or without sauce
- Boiled or mashed potato
- Plain boiled rice
- Small portion of cooked vegetables
- Dessert (for example, milk pudding, yoghurt, ice cream, jelly or crème caramel)
- Soup
- Plain biscuits (for example, rich tea, short-bread or custard creams)
- Boiled sweets
- Ovaltine or Horlicks drinks, tea, coffee, milk, squash, cocoa, Build Up

Confirmation of surgery date

When you receive confirmation of your surgery date, it is a good idea to check if you are required to fast for any length of time (if not discussed at your pre-assessment) before you arrive at the hospital.

What do I do if I'm a diabetic?

If you have a medical condition that will be made worse by fasting, for example diabetes, this will be discussed at your pre-assessment appointment and advice given in preparation for your admission.

What do I do if I'm taking bowel preparation?

Take the bowel preparation according to the instructions you have been given. Following your bowel preparation, please only drink water up until two hours prior to your surgery. If you have any queries, please contact us on the telephone numbers provided on the back of this leaflet.

Contact details

If you have any questions regarding your surgery and eating or drinking, please do not hesitate to contact one of the practitioners in the pre-assessment clinic.

Tel:

APU, Chelsea **020 7808 2406**

Day Surgery, Chelsea **020 7808 2384**

APU, Sutton **020 8661 3379/3380**

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline

020 8915 6899

(available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

References

This leaflet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this leaflet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre

Freephone: 0800 783 7176

Email: patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk

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Should you require information in an alternative format please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.



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