

# Eating, drinking, and fasting before your surgery

Trustwide clinical  
Information for Patients

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## Introduction

This leaflet is for adults who are having a surgery. It will tell you about fasting before your surgery. **You must follow the instructions given in this leaflet.**

## Planning for your surgery

Your body needs to repair itself after surgery. Eating a healthy diet in the days and weeks before and after your surgery can help. Visit the Eat-well Guide for useful information: [www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/)

Depending on the type of surgery you are having, some patients may be advised to follow a special diet in the days or weeks before surgery. Your nurse will let you know about this at your pre-operative assessment.

Please let us know if you have any special dietary needs. We will add this to your plan of care while you are in hospital.

## The day before your surgery

You may eat and drink normally the day before your surgery.

You must not become dehydrated. Make sure you drink plenty of fluids in the days before your surgery. This will help you not feel sick and may help avoid complications such as blood clots and kidney damage. Try to drink 6 to 8 glasses of fluids per day. This can include, water, squash, tea and coffee. Try to avoid sugary and fizzy drinks.

Do not drink alcohol for 2 days before your surgery. Do not smoke or vape for 6 hours before coming to hospital. This helps keep you safe and makes it easier to breathe.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.uhleicester.nhs.uk](http://www.uhleicester.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net](mailto:uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net)

## Why do I need to fast?

Before you have a surgery or a test with anaesthesia, you must stop eating and drinking for a short time. This is to keep you safe.

If there is food in your stomach, it could travel into your lungs and make you very unwell. Not eating or drinking helps stop this from happening.

Doctors all around the world give this same advice to help keep patients safe.

Fasting longer than you need to can mean you feel more unwell, cause dehydration and delay your recovery. Make sure to follow the instructions given to you carefully.

## On the day of your surgery:

### If you are asked to come in for **surgery in the morning**:

Eat your normal evening meal and have a carbohydrate snack before bedtime unless advised otherwise. Carbohydrate snack could include:

- toast,
- bowl of cereal,
- porridge,
- pitta bread,
- naan bread
- hummus,
- roti,
- banana
- yogurt
- a cereal bar

**Do not eat** food after 02:00 am.

Continue to **drink clear fluids only until 06:00am** and have a final glass of water at that time.

Clear fluids you can drink are:

- water,
- black coffee or tea (no milk),
- diluted squash and oral rehydration drinks

**Do not chew gum or suck sweets** on the day of your surgery.

Take your medication with a sip of water (30ml) as advised by your pre-operative assessment nurse.

## Foods that count as solid food:

### Stop eating these 6 hours before your procedure:

- South Asian: chapati, rice and curry, paratha, poha, idli, dosa, upma, sweet snacks.
- African and Caribbean: rice and peas, jollof rice, plantain, meat or fish stews, porridge.
- Middle Eastern: flatbread with hummus, rice dishes, shawarma wraps, lentil stews.
- British and European: toast, cereal with milk, sandwiches, pasta, meat, potatoes, porridge.

## If you are asked to come in for **surgery in the afternoon**

Eat your normal evening meal.

Have a light breakfast on the day of your surgery finishing before 07:00am unless told otherwise.

A light breakfast can be a slice of white toast light buttered, dosa, parotta, or small bowl of light cereals such as corn flakes or Rice Krispies with semi-skimmed or skimmed milk.

You can have tea or coffee with a small amount of milk.

Do not eat fried, fatty, high fibre or cooked foods.

If you have any special dietary requirements please talk about this with your nurse at your pre-operative assessment who can advise you.

Continue to **drink clear fluids only until 11:00am** and have a final glass of water at that time

**Do not chew gum or suck sweets** on the day of your surgery

Take your medication with a sip of water (30ml) as advised by your pre-operative assessment nurse.

## What is 'Sip Til Send'?

'Sip Til Send' means you might be allowed to have small sips of water while you wait for your procedure.

When you arrive, the staff will tell you if you are allowed to have sips of water.

**Always ask a staff member first before you drink anything.**

The staff will check if it is safe for you to have a sip at that moment.

This is safe and helps to keep you comfortable while waiting. It also can lower the chance of feeling sick after you procedure. It also helps you stop getting dehydrated.

## Important: special circumstances

You may get different instructions about when to stop eating or drinking if you have:

- diabetes,
- bad heartburn,
- slow stomach emptying,
- a blocked bowel,
- breathing problems with obesity,
- take medicines like SGLT2 tablets (such as Empagliflozin or Dapagliflozin),
- take weight loss injections like Mounjaro,

If you take medicines or insulin for diabetes, you will be told what to do at your pre-operative assessment. This will include when to take your medicine and when to stop eating and drinking. If you are not sure what to do or have not been given advice, please contact your diabetes service to get support.

**Always follow the special instructions given by your pre-operative nurse. If you are not sure what to do, please ask a member of staff.**



## When you arrive at the hospital

Your arrival time is not the same as your surgery time. You will come in at the same time as other patients. This helps staff get everyone ready. It also lets the theatre team see you before the session starts. They will tell you your surgery time later. They will also tell you if you can have sips of water.

Please ask your nurse or anaesthetist when you arrive if you are not sure about anything.

## Carbohydrate drinks

The nurse at your pre-operative assessment may tell you to have carbohydrate drinks before your surgery. This depends on the surgery you are having.

Having carbohydrate rich (sugary) drinks before your surgery has shown to reduce hunger and thirst and help patients recover more quickly. Not all patients can have carbohydrate drinks because of other health conditions like diabetes. If they are suitable for you to take, the nurse will give you a leaflet and explain how and when to take the carbohydrate drinks before your surgery.

## After your surgery

Maintaining a healthy diet after your surgery is an important for your recovery. If you have been told otherwise by your Doctor or Dietitian, continue to follow a balanced diet. If you have any problems managing your food, your appetite is poor, or notice a change in your weight, speak to your GP.

Visit: <https://yourhealth.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/> and search or 'Eating enough to support your recovery at home' or leaflet 963 for more information.

## Contact us

The nurse will confirm your eating and drinking instructions as part of your pre-operative assessment. Please contact us if you are still not sure of your fasting instructions or if you have any other questions.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل  
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net](mailto:uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net)