

Your child's fasting instructions before anaesthetic

Information for children, families and carers

We've given you this factsheet because your child needs to fast before they have an operation under anaesthetic. It explains what fasting is and why it is important, and it guides you on how your child should fast. If you have any questions, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is fasting?

Fasting means your child must not eat or drink anything for a short period of time before their operation.

Why does my child need to fast?

Your child must have an empty stomach so they do not vomit while they're under anaesthetic. This will help to prevent complications during the operation and make their recovery comfortable.

Fasting instructions

To avoid any delays or possible cancellation of your child's operation, please follow the correct instructions carefully.

If you have received specific fasting instructions from your child's doctor, you must follow the agreed plan and not the table below.

Excessive fasting is bad for your child. Please follow the instructions below closely and encourage them to drink water up until their admission.

Morning procedure	Afternoon procedure	Fasting instructions
until 2.30am	until 7.30am	They can eat any food and any drink they would like. This may include any milky drink, such as formula milk, tube feeds, or fortified breast milk.
until 5.30am	until 10.30am	They may continue to be breastfed (if your child is breastfed).
until 7.30am	until 12.30pm	They may safely continue to drink clear fluids from the following list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water/flavoured water (not fortified, thickened or fizzy) • fruit squash (regardless of sugar content) • clear apple/cranberry juice (without pulp) • pre-mixed squash drinks (Ribena, Fruit shoot, Oasis) • non-fizzy sports drinks (Lucozade Sport, Powerade).

When your child comes into hospital

On the day of your child's admission, please make sure:

- your child takes their usual medication with a small amount of water (unless you have been told not to by their hospital team)
- one parent or legal guardian must come with your child to the hospital, because they will need to sign consent forms on behalf of your child.

Please bring:

- all of your child's medicine
- any specialised equipment that your child needs (for example, NIPPY, trachy box)
- a reusable drink bottle for your child
- your child's red book (if your child is still an infant)
- If your child is bottle fed or has a teacher beaker, please bring a feed with you.

If your child is due to stay in hospital overnight, we can provide an overnight bed for one parent or guardian.

Further information

Please make sure you read the Royal College of Anaesthetists information for children, parents and carers, as it contains important information regarding the common events and risks in anaesthesia, along with helpful resources and materials to prepare your child for surgery.

www.rcoa.ac.uk/patients/patient-information-resources/information-children-parents-carers

Useful links

www.uhs.nhs.uk/for-visitors/southampton-childrens-hospital/preparing-for-your-visit

www.rcoa.ac.uk/patients/patient-information-resources/information-children-parents-carers/info-parents-carers

www.rcoa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2025-11/Child-Infographics2022.pdf

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Child Health Admissions team

Telephone: **023 8120 2867** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm)

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