

Fasting your child

Frequently asked questions

As a parent or carer you may have questions about fasting your child prior to surgery at Perth Children's Hospital (PCH). See the questions below for answers to commonly asked questions.

Why does my child have to fast to have an operation?

Fasting is necessary to reduce the risk of food or fluid being vomited under anaesthesia and inhaled into the lungs. This can be a very serious condition requiring intensive care treatment. We advise parents to ensure their child remains fasted unless advised by staff.

What are clear fluids?

Clear fluids are those fluids which, when held to the light, are transparent. They include water, glucose-based drinks, cordials and clear juices. They do not include drinks with particles (i.e. cloudy apple juice) or milk-based products.

Is fasting dangerous for my child?

Short term fasting is not dangerous. We understand that it can be upsetting to your child but there are no adverse outcomes to fasting. Clear fluids may be given up to 1 hour prior to the surgery which will hydrate your child. Your child may also be given fluids through a drip and these fluids do have a nutritional component.

Why are some children having their surgery before my child even though we were here first?

Your child has been placed on an emergency (unplanned) list. Other children may be on an elective (planned) list and may have been waiting many months for their surgery. Their surgery has been booked in advance and their surgeon has booked this theatre time today.

In other cases, some children who are also on the emergency list like your child may need to go first because their surgery is more serious or the child may have other medical problems. Our theatre staff plan the theatre lists very carefully as your child's safety is the number one priority.

Why does my child's surgery keep being delayed?

Unfortunately there are times when, despite our best intentions, the surgery time for a patient needs to be postponed. This can occur for a number of reasons, the most common being that another emergency case took priority. If this happens, our theatre staff will endeavour to inform your nursing staff as soon as possible and our anaesthetists will



advise if your child can have more clear fluid. We understand that this is extremely frustrating but ask for your cooperation in ensuring your child remains fasted unless advised otherwise.

If you have further queries about fasting prior to surgery at PCH, please discuss with your doctor or nurse.



Government of **Western Australia**
Child and Adolescent Health Service

**This document can be made available in alternative formats
on request for a person with a disability.**

Child and Adolescent Health Service

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