

# AB224. SOH21AS261. Preoperative fasting period among elective surgical patients at a tertiary level hospital, University Hospital Limerick (UHL)

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**Background:** Preoperative fasting period is the prescribed time when oral intake of liquids or solids are restricted prior to surgical procedures either by general or regional anaesthesia, including sedation. The purpose of this obligatory fasting is to reduce the incidence of pulmonary aspiration of gastric contents secondary to the loss of airway reflexes. This potential consequence of anaesthesia has led to the universal adoption of preoperative fasting guidelines. The aim of this audit is to identify the duration of fasting and to investigate any cause of deviation from guidelines.

**Methods:** This audit is a cross-sectional study of pre-operative fasting time among elective surgical patients. Data from 50 patients were collected using structured questionnaires prior to their surgery.

**Results:** The mean fasting time was  $15 \pm 3.07$  hours for solids and  $11.3 \pm 4.5$  hours for liquids, both exceeding the recommended fasting period. In addition, 33 patients (66%) expressed their dissatisfaction regarding their fasting periods and indicated that having a light meal prior to their surgery would make them feel better as majority of those studied were not operated upon as the first patient. Fort-three patients (86%) admitted that a glass of water 2 hours

prior to their surgery would appease them.

**Conclusions:** The mean fasting periods were 2.5 times longer for solids and 5.5 times for clear liquids than recommended by hospital policy. In addition to patient dissatisfaction, this has physiological implications for patient care. A hospital-wide approach needs to be undertaken to ensure a more accurate time of surgery is made available to individual patients.

**Keywords:** Preoperative fasting; clear fluids; pulmonary aspiration; solids; fasting guidelines

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## Footnote

*Conflicts of Interest:* The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

*Ethical Statement:* The authors are accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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