

## FAQs | Fasting before your procedure

*This document provides clear, concise answers to the most common questions around fasting, including what you can and cannot eat or drink, and how medications – including GLP-1 medications – may affect your preparation.*

### **What are the standard fasting requirements for an upcoming procedure?**

Most patients should stop eating solid foods after 11 p.m. the night before their procedure and may continue clear liquids only until the designated stop time before the procedure. For specific stop times, visit [Inova.org/Prepare](https://www.inova.org/Prepare) or call your pre-procedural evaluation clinic.

### **What should I avoid?**

Do not eat solid foods or soups, or drink clear liquids after your instructed stop time for your procedure. Eating or drinking too close to your procedure can increase the risk of complications and will result in your procedure being delayed or rescheduled to a different day.

### **Why can't I eat before my procedure?**

If food or liquid remains in your stomach, it could move up into your throat and enter your lungs (aspiration). Fasting helps keep you safe while you're under anesthesia or sedation.

### **What counts as clear liquids?**

Clear liquids are liquids you can see through. Examples include:

- Water
- Clear apple juice
- Black coffee or plain tea (no milk, cream or honey)
- Clear sports drinks (i.e., Gatorade®)

### **What counts as solid food?**

Anything that is not a clear liquid is considered a solid food or a nonclear liquid. Examples include:

- Meat, poultry, fish
- Bread, cereal, rice, pasta
- Fruits and vegetables (raw or cooked)
- Dairy products (milk, yogurt, custard, cheese)
- Soups
- Smoothies or protein shakes

### **What if I'm on a GLP-1 medication?**

GLP-1 medications (such as Ozempic®, Wegovy®, Mounjaro®, or Zepbound®) can slow how quickly your stomach empties. If you're taking GLP-1 medication, do not eat solid foods or soups, or drink non-clear liquids for **24 hours before procedure time**. Patients should follow a clear liquid diet only during that time.

### **What are the instructions if I take GLP-1 medication?**

To reduce the risk of complications, please follow these fasting guidelines:



- **24 hours before your procedure:** Do not eat solid food or soup, and do not drink non-clear liquids
- **8 hours before your procedure:** Stop drinking high-carbohydrate clear liquids (Clear Fast® and Ensure Pre-Surgery clear carbohydrate drink)
- **4 hours before your procedure:** Stop everything by mouth (no food and clear drinks)

**What if I stopped taking my GLP-1 medication?**

If you stopped a **GLP-1 medication in the last five weeks**, please follow the special diet and fasting instructions for GLP-1. Be sure to tell your provider that you stopped this medication.

**What if my surgeon provides different fasting instructions?**

In general, fasting longer is safer and helps reduce the risk of complications. If your surgeon asks you to fast longer than these guidelines, follow your surgeon's instructions. If the fasting time is shorter, follow the guidelines in this document.

**What happens if I don't follow these guidelines?**

If you don't follow these fasting instructions, **your care team will delay or reschedule your procedure** to a different day.

**Where can I find more details about fasting?**

For general fasting guidelines, stop times and other ways to prepare for your procedures, visit [Inova.org/Prepare](https://Inova.org/Prepare).