

Fasting times in elective caesarean section patients- are we feeding women the right information?

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Background

Pre-operative fasting instruction have evolved considerably since Mendelson's recognition of pulmonary aspiration during obstetric anaesthesia⁽¹⁾. Guidance for elective caesarean section (LSCS) patients has moved towards avoiding prolonged periods of fasting and should follow standard pre-operative instructions for adults⁽²⁾.

Aims and Method

Assess information provided to women scheduled for elective LSCS in one obstetric unit and ascertain actual fasting times. Information was obtained by surveying 20 women within 48 hours of elective LSCS.

Results

All women recalled being given information regarding fasting times. Six women were given verbal information only and the remaining 14 received written information (either hand-written or an information leaflet).

All 20 women stated they were informed to fast for solids from midnight. 12 women were instructed to fast for clear fluids from 6am (morning of surgery), 6 were told to fast for clear fluids from midnight and 2 women were unsure. Fasting times for clear fluid ranged from 3-18hours. Median clear fluid fasting time was 7hours.

Discussion

Currently there is variation in the information provided to women in our centre regarding clear fluid fasting time prior to elective LSCS and actual fasting times exceed recommended guidance.

Women should receive standardised information in order to reduce excessive fasting times. An updated patient information leaflet may help do so with a re-audit to assess it's impact.

References

1)Mendelson. The aspiration of stomach contents into the lungs during obstetric anaesthesia. Am J Obstet Gynecol 1946;52:191-205.

2)OAA/AAGBI Guidelines for Obstetric Anaesthetic Services 2013. Available at: http://www.aagbi.org/sites/default/files/obstetric_anaesthetic_services_2013.pdf (Accessed August 2014)