

Fasting before surgery not necessary

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A Dallas researcher thinks its time to end the 60-year-old practice of forcing patients to fast before having surgery.

Elizabeth Winslow, a nurse at Presbyterian Hospital, has spent years studying preoperative fasting and finds the practice causes more harm than good, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reports.

Winslow says fasting is often associated with adverse effects such as hunger and dehydration, and can also cause headaches, dizziness and nausea in some people.

The practice began 60 years ago when a New York doctor named Curtis Mendelson reported that surgery patients who recently had food or drink were more likely to regurgitate their stomach contents.

Patients can choke to death on regurgitated food or it can cause pulmonary aspiration if it leaks into the lungs.

When researchers revisited the issue in the 1980s, they found that fasting did not reduce the incidence of pulmonary aspiration and that patients could have clear liquids up to two hours before surgery with no ill effects.

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