

# Women should be allowed to eat, drink during labor: researcher

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The traditional practice of restricting food and fluids during labour does not provide any benefits, finds a new review co-authored by a Queen's University Associate Professor.

"Based on our review, there is no convincing and current evidence to support restriction of fluids, and perhaps [food](#), for [women](#) during labour. Women should be able to choose for themselves," says Dr. Joan Tranmer of the Queen's School of Nursing.

Practitioners have been concerned about eating and drinking during labour since the 1940s. The restriction is thought to prevent Mendelson's syndrome (named after work by Dr. Carl Mendelson), a rare, but sometimes fatal, condition caused by regurgitation of acidic stomach contents into the lungs when a [general anaesthetic](#) is given.

"With medical advances over the past 60 years, including the increase use of epidural anesthesia, we thought it was time to question the widespread ban on food and drink now that we are in the 2000s," says Professor Tranmer. "The use of [general anesthesia](#) during C-sections is low. And even when used, the techniques have improved since the 1940s, so the risk of maternal death or illness is very, very low"

There is tremendous variation in the practice of fluid and food restriction across birth settings (home births versus hospitals).

" The food and fluid restriction can be stressful and uncomfortable for

some pregnant women, especially for those who are in labour for more than 12 hours and unable to eat," , adds Professor Tranmer, who is based out of the Clinical Research Centre at Kingston General Hospital. "Instead of eating ice chips, a snack can provide some nourishment, comfort and much needed energy."

Provided by Queen's University

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