

What NPO Really Means

Now, a Health Minute.

Before bloodwork or a medical procedure, your healthcare provider may tell you to fast, or have nothing by mouth. NPO means not to eat or drink anything for a certain amount of time before a procedure or testing.

It's important to keep your stomach as empty as possible, especially if you are going under anesthesia. Food in your stomach can lead to a serious complication called Aspiration Pneumonia. This is where stomach content can end up in the lungs.

If you are taking medications, ask your healthcare provider if you should take them while fasting. Follow NPO instructions as closely as you can to make sure your procedure can be done as scheduled safely.