

## NPO – No food/drink before surgery or IR

If your child is going to have general anesthesia to help her sleep through surgery or an Interventional Radiology (IR) procedure, you should know the hospital's NPO policy. NPO is short for the Latin words *nil per os*, which mean "nothing by mouth." In this handout, we will also give you ideas to help your child cope with not eating and drinking.

The NPO policy is important because patients who have full stomachs have a greater chance of getting food or liquid in their lungs during anesthesia. This could cause pneumonia or other serious health problems. For your child's safety, please follow the NPO guidelines.

### NPO guidelines for all surgery and IR patients

- Surgery and IR patients must not eat or drink anything past midnight the night before a scheduled surgery or IR procedure.
- More than likely, your child has important medicines that she takes regularly, such as steroids and those for pain, seizures, or blood pressure. You can give these medicines to your child with a sip of water up to one (1) hour before anesthesia.
- If ordered by the doctor, your child may drink CT scan contrast liquid up to 2 hours before anesthesia.

### Helpful hints

We know it is hard to keep children from eating when they are hungry and drinking when they are thirsty. However, your child's safety depends on you following the NPO guidelines.

- To help your child cope with waiting, family members should not eat or drink around the child during the NPO period.
- Set your alarm clock for 10 p.m. or 11 p.m. Then, feed your child a snack or full meal at that time.
- You might try a late night pizza party. Keep in mind that the snack or meal must be finished before midnight.

### Questions?

If you have questions or want to learn more about NPO guidelines, please talk to your child's doctor or nurse.

*This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Our aim is to promote active participation in your care and treatment by providing information and education. Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options should be discussed with your physician.*