

No benefits or harms from restricting oral fluid and food intake during labour

Clinical question	What are the benefits and harms of oral fluid or food restriction during labour?
Bottom line	The evidence identified no benefits or harms (in terms of caesarean sections, operative vaginal births or Apgar scores <7 at 5 minutes) associated with restricting women's access to fluids and foods during labour, for women at low risk of potentially requiring a general anaesthetic; the studies did not assess women's views or feelings of control. Hence, women should have the autonomy and freedom to choose whether to eat or drink in labour, or not. Women should be able to consume what they desire and in doing so experience no adverse impact on labour, maternal or foetal outcomes.
Caveat	There were no studies identified that looked at restricting oral fluids and food during labour for women at increased risk of requiring general anaesthesia, so restricting oral fluid and food intake for these women remains an unproven intervention.
Context	Restricting oral fluids and food during labour is common practice across many birth settings, with some women only being allowed sips of water or ice chips. Restriction of oral intake may be unpleasant for some women, and may adversely influence their experience of labour.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Singata M et al. Restricted oral fluid and food intake during labour. Cochrane Reviews 2010, Issue 1. Article No. CD003930. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD003930.pub2. This review contains 5 studies involving 3130 participants
PEARLS 237, March 2010, written by Brian R McAvoy	

[References]

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