Researchers report that many patients experience unnecessarily long preoperative fasts. Researchers report that many patients experience unnecessarily long preoperative fasts.

The American Society of Anesthesiologists guidelines for preoperative fasting in healthy patients undergoing elective procedures are available online at www.asahq.org/practice/npo/npguide.html. Withdrawal from caffeine in beverages such as coffee or colas may cause headaches and irritability. Dehydration, hypovolemia, and hypoglycemia are other recognized side effects. Thirst, worry, and hunger are reported by patients to be related to fasting. Fasting does not ensure that the stomach will be empty or that the gastric contents will be less acidic.