

Food for Thought: Patient Perspectives on Diet During Labor with Epidural Analgesia

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Introduction:

ACOG PUBLICATIONS

ACOG Committee Opinion No. 441: Oral Intake During Labor

- Aspiration during cesarean delivery is rare ($\sim 0.06\text{--}0.1\%$)^{1,2}
- Psychological distress?^{2,3}



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Hypothesis:

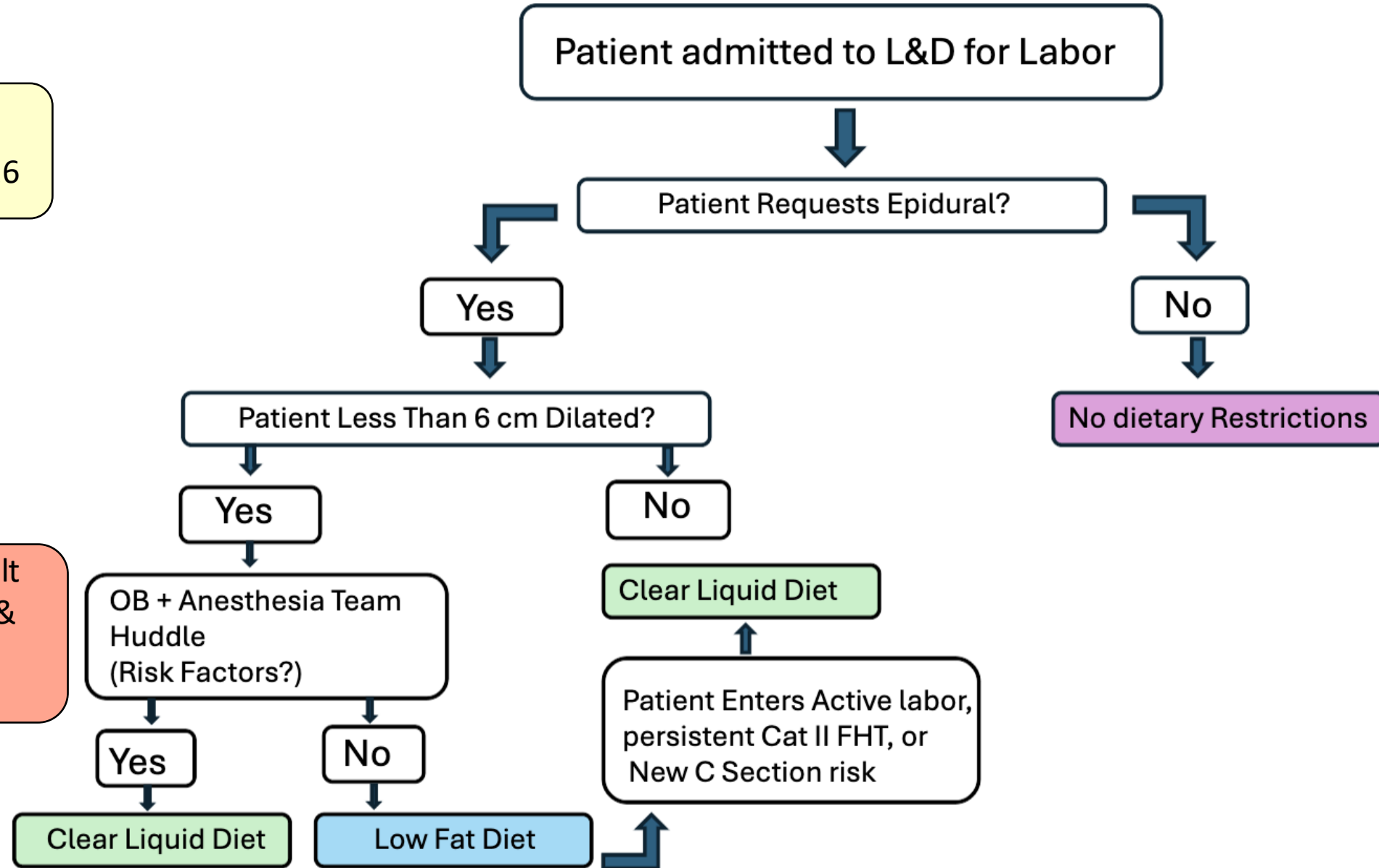


Less restrictive diet = Improved patient experience

Study Design & Methods

Voluntary Post-Partum
Survey: Sep 2025–Mar 2026

Key Risk Factors: Difficult
Airway, Aspiration Risk, &
Risk of Unplanned
C- Section/OR Case



Results

Survey Question	Clear Liquid Diet N (%) Total N = 162	Low Fat Diet N (%) Total N = 40	Relative Risk RR (95% CI)	p Value
Labor >12h			1.01 (0.76 - 1.35)	0.92
Yes	94 (58.0)	24 (60.0)		
No	65 (40.1)	16 (40.0)		
Unsure	3 (1.9)	0 (0.0)		
Delivery Mode			1.01 (0.99 - 1.02)	0.32
Vaginal	161 (99.4)	40 (100.0)		
Cesarean	1 (0.6)	0 (0.0)		
Reported Hunger			1.03 (0.75 - 1.42)	0.84
Yes	82 (50.6)	22 (55.0)		
No	72 (44.4)	18 (45.0)		
Unsure	7 (4.3)	0 (0.0)		
No response	1 (0.6)	0 (0.0)		
Wanted to Eat More			0.88 (0.52 - 1.47)	0.62
Yes	56 (34.6)	12 (30.0)		
No	104 (64.2)	27 (67.5)		
Unsure	2 (1.2)	1 (2.5)		
Eating More Helpful			0.75 (0.34 - 1.65)	0.48
Yes	32 (19.8)	6 (15.0)		
No	108 (66.7)	29 (72.5)		
Unsure	22 (13.6)	5 (12.5)		

N= 211 patients

(162 Clear Liquid Diet, 40 Low Fat Diet)

Comments From Patients on Low Fat Diet

"I really appreciated I could have the extra calories to prepare for pushing"

"It was great not having to starve for a whole day. Kept me in good spirits and energetic"

Comments From Patients on Clear Liquid Diet

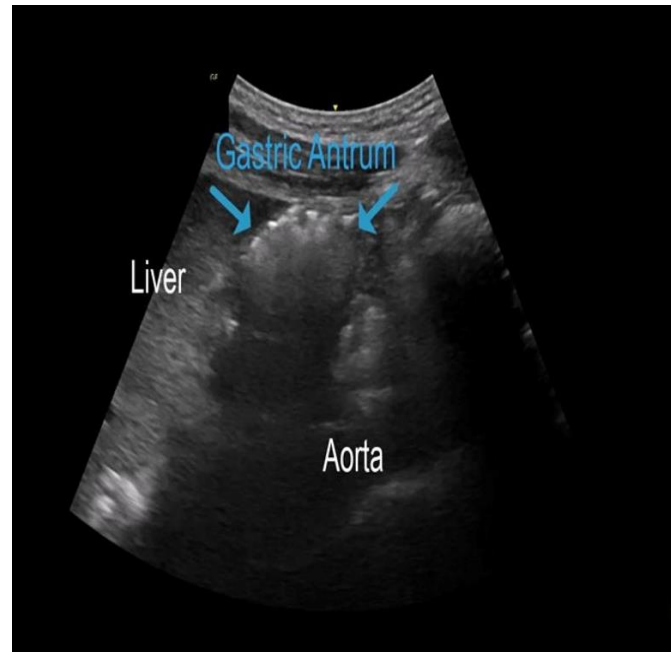
"I wish I could eat more especially since I was low risk"

"Eating more could have made me less cranky"

Conclusion & Discussion

Conclusion:

- No difference in hunger or desire to eat between Low Fat Diet and Clear Liquid Diet
- Patients reported appreciating the option to eat
- Larger studies needed to assess safety



Future Research:

- Clinical outcomes
- Gastric ultrasound
- Patient safety