

Undergoing surgery: the perspective of a breastfeeding mother

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During my pregnancy, I had a nephrostomy tube inserted because of a stuck kidney stone. The doctor said I would need a lithotripsy after delivery.

When they called to book the lithotripsy, I was 6-weeks postpartum and breastfeeding, and I wasn't pumping. The first slot of the day was available, so I asked for it because I knew it was unlikely the surgery would get pushed back. That was important to me as I wouldn't be able to take anything by mouth after midnight.

had to ask for another gown because I was completely soaked. The nurse and I problem-solved to contain the mess and give me a bit of dignity. I could tell that she felt bad. I had deliberately worn a bra without any wire so as not to interfere with the electrocardiography leads or get in the way of defibrillator paddles should something go wrong. We were able to put some gauze pads in the bra and that helped.

The anesthesiologists told me I was going under general anesthesia. When

is lactating so that patients don't have to bring it up at every interaction? We sometimes forget.

My experience changed my thinking as a nurse. Previously, I wouldn't have thought that a parent coming in for surgery at 6 weeks postpartum would not be able to regulate milk flow and would need something to catch spontaneous milk flow. And if the patient's surgery is delayed, that they might like to pump before hand. If I am caring for a parent who's intubated and sedated, I wouldn't have thought that maybe we should pump for the patient. Honestly, it was a huge eye-opener for me.

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Consent has been given for this perspective to be shared.

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Hospitals flag patients' allergies; couldn't they also flag whether someone is lactating...?

At my preoperative consultation, I asked if I could bring my little guy with me so I could feed him just before the procedure. They said, "Yeah, no problem." But when I arrived for the surgery, I wasn't allowed to have him with me and they didn't give me a reason. If I had pushed harder, perhaps they'd have allowed him to stay, but I thought I should follow the rules and I didn't want to make the staff's day harder. I was frustrated, though, because I was hoping to get one extra feed in before the procedure.

They asked me to change. I mentioned that I was breastfeeding and my breast milk wasn't regulated yet. I soon

they asked if I had any questions, I asked if it was safe for me to breastfeed afterwards. I could tell they weren't anticipating that question.

Everybody was willing to help when I told them I was breastfeeding, but people were reactive, not proactive. For example, nobody asked if I was pumping, or suggested how much milk I should pump. It was about 6 hours from when I went in to when I got home. I definitely could have used a pumping session because my breasts were very heavy and painful when I got home. It would be nice to see a more proactive approach. Hospitals flag patients' allergies; couldn't they also flag whether someone