



Parent information – Swallowed (ingested) foreign bodies including batteries and super strong magnets

Children's Services

Introduction

Children sometimes swallow things such as coins, small toys or beads. Most objects that children swallow are harmless and are passed through the digestive system and out with the faeces (poo) without any problem.

Sometimes, swallowed objects get stuck in the oesophagus (food pipe) and may not pass into the stomach. In these cases, a doctor will need to remove the object.

Button batteries

- ◆ Button batteries are small round silver batteries found in lots of electrical toys and devices. If a button battery is swallowed and becomes stuck in the oesophagus, it can burn through tissue in just two hours causing severe injury or death. Button batteries can also cause burns if they're lodged in a child's nose or ear.

If you think a child has swallowed a button battery, take them to your nearest Emergency Department straight away or call an ambulance immediately. Do not induce vomiting.

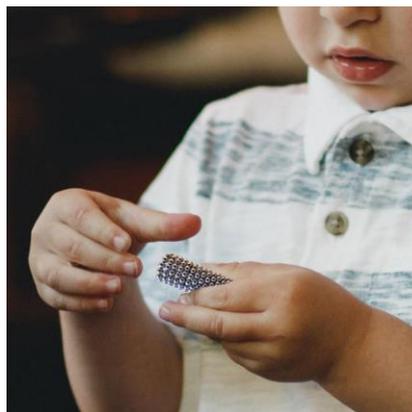
Magnets

- ◆ Magnets can be dangerous when swallowed, especially if two or more are swallowed.
- ◆ Recently, a different type of magnet has gone on sale. These are known as Neo Magnet, Bucky Balls, Magnet Balls or Super Strong Rare-Earth Magnets. They are most often sold as 'adult desk toys', 'stress relievers' or 'brain development toys' and it is illegal to sell them to children less than 14 years of age.
- ◆ These magnets are between 7 and 14 times stronger than traditional magnets and are sometimes called super strong or powerful magnets. They can be a variety of shapes, most often balls or discs.

If you think your child has swallowed a magnet, take them to your nearest Emergency Department straight away or call an ambulance immediately. Do not induce vomiting.

Please turn over to see pictures of these different types of magnets.

These are some examples of what they look like:



Signs and symptoms of swallowed objects

Most children have no symptoms after swallowing an object, and the object will not cause any problems.

- ◆ Occasionally, the swallowed object can become stuck in the oesophagus (food pipe).

Take your child to your GP or Emergency Department if they have:

- trouble swallowing food
- drooling
- pain in the chest or neck
- ◆ If your child is coughing or is having difficulty breathing, the object may be in their airway or lungs - **Call an ambulance immediately if your child is having trouble breathing.**
- ◆ Very rarely, the object can become stuck in the stomach or intestines.

Take your child to your GP or Emergency Department if they have:

- ongoing vomiting
- abdominal (tummy) pain
- blood in their vomit or poo
- a high temperature (fever)

Treatment in hospital

In hospital, a doctor or nurse will ask what your child has swallowed. An X-ray may be done if the swallowed object is made of material that shows up on an X-ray or if your child has worrying symptoms. Depending on what the object is and where it is in the digestive system, the object may need to be removed.

- ◆ Some objects can harm the body and may need to be removed urgently; these include button batteries and magnets.
- ◆ Objects in the oesophagus often need to be removed; this will depend on your child's symptoms.
- ◆ Most objects in the stomach or further along in the intestines will pass safely on their own.

Care at home

If doctors are unable to see a swallowed object on an X-ray and your child has no worrying symptoms, it is okay to take your child home.

- ◆ Very rarely, the object can become stuck in the stomach or intestines.

Observe your child for any developing symptoms and take them to the nearest Emergency Department immediately if you or your child have:

- concern of further battery, magnet or foreign bodies that have been swallowed.
- concern about a change in your child's eating patterns, e.g., refusing food or fluids.
- abdominal (tummy) pain
- ongoing vomiting
- blood in their vomit or poo
- a fever

After going home, most children will not need any follow-up or further X-rays. There is no need to examine your child's poo to find the swallowed object, unless you have been told to do so by the doctor.

Care following discharge after swallowing a magnet

If your child has been discharged after swallowing a magnet, even though the magnet has not passed through them yet, it is okay to take your child home.

After going home, your child will need a follow-up X-ray about 6-12 hours later - you should have been given a time to re-attend the Emergency Department. **This follow-up X-ray is extremely important** so doctors can make sure the magnet is moving normally through your child's bowels.

Until your child has had their repeat X-ray, remove any other external magnetic objects nearby and avoid clothes with metallic buttons or belts with buckles. There is no need to examine your child's poo to find the swallowed object, unless you have been told to do so by the doctor.

If a single magnet is swallowed, it can be expected to be passed spontaneously if the magnet is not too large.

Key points to remember

- ◆ If your child has swallowed a harmless object and is showing no symptoms, there is no need to seek medical advice unless you are concerned about your child.
- ◆ Most objects that children swallow are harmless, and pass through the digestive system without any problem.
- ◆ **If you think a child has swallowed a button battery or magnet, call an ambulance or go to your nearest Emergency Department immediately. Do not induce vomiting.**
- ◆ If your child has worrying symptoms, take them to your nearest Emergency Department. Objects that become stuck in the oesophagus, stomach or intestines may need to be removed.

Useful telephone numbers

NHS 111

☎ 111

Children's Emergency Department
Lister Hospital

☎ 01438 284333

Urgent Care Centre, New QEII
Welwyn Garden City

☎ 01707 247549

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