



**The Leeds
Teaching Hospitals**
NHS Trust

Swallowed Objects

Information for parents and carers

A swallowed foreign body is an object which would normally not be swallowed by a person.

Children often place non food items in their mouths. We commonly see children attending the Paediatric Emergency Department after swallowing coins, small toys, etc. Most of these are not harmful and do not cause serious problems and rarely require any treatment or intervention.

Examples of swallowed objects requiring no intervention are:

- Coins
- Plastic
- Plastic bricks
- Small toys
- Jewellery

When is intervention required?

Intervention is only needed when the object may cause significant risk to the internal organs. Button batteries are potentially dangerous due to the corrosive nature of the battery once swallowed. Swallowing magnets may cause problems- see separate leaflet. Magnets can stick to other metal objects or occasionally clothing and could cause problems with the bowel wall.

Children who have swallowed button batteries or multiple magnets will always require assessment by Paediatric Surgery to see if further observation or treatment is required.



What investigations may be needed?

It is rare that a child requires any investigations after swallowing a foreign body and assessment is based on clinical examination and history taking.

If the foreign body is metal the nurse may use a hand held metal detector to find the location of the foreign body.

Lots of swallowed foreign bodies do not show up on x-ray which is why it is not necessary for your child to have one.

What should I do for my child?

Continue as normal. Your child can eat and drink as normal. You do not need to try and make them sick.

What should I watch out for?

You do not need to check your child's poo (stools) for the foreign body being passed.

It is extremely rare for a simple foreign body to cause any serious problems. Your child may complain of some mild abdominal discomfort, but this is also rare.

Should your child develop severe abdominal pain, abdominal swelling, passing blood from their bottom, vomiting (particularly dark green/red), or appears significantly unwell up to five days after swallowing, you should return to the Paediatric Emergency department.

How can I make my home safe to prevent future episodes

- Ensure all medications / substances / small objects are in a secure location that your child can not reach or open.
- **DO NOT** allow your child to play with button batteries or magnets.
- Ensure your child only plays with toys appropriate for their age.
- If your child is playing with an older child please ensure there is adequate supervision if small toys are present.