

# Looking after your child swallowing a magnet or battery: Foreign body ingestion

## Introduction

Your child has been assessed by one of our doctors who believes that it is safe for you to take your child home. This leaflet has been written by the doctors and nurses working in the department to act as a guide and is to remind you of some of the things that you need to know in order to look after your child at home. We hope that this will be helpful to you. Please read it carefully.

If you have any worries or concerns you may call NHS 111 who will be able to give medical advice over the telephone, or alternatively you may contact your General Practitioner (GP), or come back to the Emergency Department.

## What is foreign body ingestion?

Most swallowed objects (ingested foreign bodies) will pass spontaneously. At least 80% of foreign bodies will pass without the doctors and nurses doing anything. However, some can cause damage to the tummy (gastrointestinal tract) and/or become stuck. Patients who swallow foreign bodies may not have any worrying symptoms at the time, but sometimes symptoms can develop. Today, your child has been discharged following the ingestion of a magnet or a button battery. Even though they have not passed them yet, it is OK to take your child home. This leaflet is designed to tell you specifically about the things to look out for after you take your child home.

## What should I expect?

In the Emergency Department, your child will have an x-ray of their chest and tummy (abdomen). Sometimes we may do a second x-ray of their tummy from the side (but not always).

- x The nurses and doctors will check your child's pulse and breathing, and make sure they are not in any pain.

- x Your child will only be discharged home once we are happy that your child is not at high risk of developing any worrying symptoms.
- x If a single magnet or button battery is ingested, it is likely it will pass without the doctors and nurses needing to do anything.
- x You will be asked to bring your child back to hospital for a repeat x-ray within the next 6-12 hours. Please come:  
to: .....  
on: .....  
at: .....

## What can I do?

- x Until your child has had their repeat X-ray, remove any other external magnets from nearby, and avoid clothes with metal buttons or belts with a metal buckle.
- x We do not advise that you examine your child's faeces/poo to find the swallowed object.

## How do I know when to seek medical attention?

Very rarely, the object can become stuck in the stomach or intestines. Please bring your child to the Children's Emergency Department IMMEDIATELY if they have:

- x Concerns of further magnet or foreign body ingestion
- x Ongoing vomiting
- x Abdominal (tummy) pain
- x Blood in their vomit or faeces/poo
- x A fever
- x You have concerns about a change in your child's eating patterns e.g. refusing food or fluids.

## Key points to remember

The majority of swallowed objects will pass without anybody doing anything.

- x We do not advise that you examine your child's faeces/poo to find the swallowed object.
- x The follow up x-ray is extremely important so doctors can make sure the magnets or battery are moving normally through your child's bowels. Please speak to your nurse or doctor if you have worries about this.

