



Ingestion of Super Strong Magnets in Children



An 18-month-old child presented twice to the ED with vomiting and poor appetite. Operative findings: Over 20 adhered "super-strong" magnetic balls causing fistulation and volvulus of jejunal and ileal loops.

Intestinal injury can occur within 8-24 hours following ingestion, but *may* not manifest itself for weeks after ingestion.

A **symptomatic** patient who has ingested a super-strong magnet is a **TIME CRITICAL EMERGENCY** and should prompt surgical review.

- Super-strong magnets are found in desk toys, toys & fake piercings.
- Consider the possibility of super-strong magnet ingestion in patients with unexplained respiratory and abdominal symptoms.
- **DO NOT** use a metal detector, as imaging is required.
- If a magnet is seen on CXR or AXR, get a **lateral film** to assess the number of magnets and their position.
- Passage of magnets to the stomach **cannot** be used as a criterion that the child is free from a potentially catastrophic underlying injury.
- The progression of the extra strong magnet(s) through the GI tract is crucial to whether surgical intervention is required.
- Asymptomatic patients with magnet ingestion require follow-up imaging 6-12 hours after initial X Ray & robust safety netting.

For Safety Alerts and RCEM issued Safety Flashes see:

<https://rcem.ac.uk/safety-3/>