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Ashford Hospital
London Road
Ashford, Middlesex
TW15 3AA
Tel: **01784 884488**

St. Peter's Hospital
Guildford Road
Chertsey, Surrey
KT16 0PZ.
Tel: **01932 872000**

Website: www.ashfordstpeters.nhs.uk

Paediatric Foreign Bodies Management in the Paediatric Emergency Department



Children very commonly put objects such as toys, beads or pieces of food in their ears and noses. The doctor will check both ears and both nostrils as it isn't unusual for the child to put objects in more than one place.

Most foreign objects in ears do not need to be removed urgently, with the exception of live insects and batteries, other objects can be left for a few days. The tissues in the ear canal are very delicate, and can be easily damaged by trying to remove an object, especially in very young children, who are not always able to co-operate. The safest practice is to refer non urgent cases to an Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) clinic, for removal by a specialist who has the appropriate equipment. These are usually seen within a week.

Foreign bodies in the nose can present more problems. There may be a risk of the object falling back into the throat or lungs (aspiration), although this is very rare. If a child has put magnets up each nostril, this will need to be treated very urgently as there is risk of damage to the cartilage separating the nostrils (septum).

The triage nurse will assess the child and will usually ask the parents to perform the 'Mother's kiss' manoeuvre. This involves blocking the patent nostril, the parent making a seal over the child's mouth, and blowing to try to dislodge the object. The child will not suffer any damage to the lungs as they will instinctively protect them.

If the object is not too far up the nose and can be easily seen, the doctor may be able to remove it with forceps, if the child is able to

co-operate. The danger is that the object may be pushed higher up the nose if the child is unable to stay still for the procedure. The child may need to be seen by the ENT specialists if the object is not easily removed in the Paediatric Emergency Department (ED). If there is a clinic in St Peter's Hospital they may be able to fit the child in at the time. All other cases will have to be referred to the on call ENT doctors in Royal Surrey County Hospital (RSCH) in Guildford, as the ENT service is based there, rather than at St Peter's.

A foreign body in the throat, unless it is easily removable e.g. a fish bone, is likely to require an emergency procedure either in St Peter's or in RSCH. Each case will be assessed individually, and treated accordingly.

Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty.

If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net. If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

Author: Dr Erin Dawson

Department: Paediatrics

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