

Be sure to keep all small items that could cause your baby to choke out of his/her reach. Be particularly careful with small toys that belong to older siblings. Never feed a baby hard pieces of food as they may cause choking.

Swallowed Objects

Young children like to examine just about everything with their mouths. This tendency can lead to problems-poisoning, choking, and swallowing dangerous objects.

Objects placed in the mouth may find their way down one or two passageways. If something starts to go down your child's trachea [airway] toward the lungs, she will begin to choke and will need help immediately. If the object starts to move down the esophagus [food tube] toward the stomach and gets stuck, she will probably not choke [unless the object is so large that it also presses against the trachea], but she will have problems swallowing. She may drool because she can't swallow her saliva. An object lodged in the esophagus must be removed by a doctor.

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Once an object gets in your child's stomach, the immediate danger is over. Most small objects [like coins, marbles, paperclips, and even sharp objects like pins and small pieces of glass] will usually pass through the digestive system without problems. Occasionally, something will cause an obstruction of the digestive tract or penetrate a segment of intestine. Abdominal pain, vomiting, and fever may develop. It may be a few days after she swallowed the object before the symptoms begin. She needs to be seen by her doctor. X-ray films will be taken. Metal objects and many glass, plastic, and wooden objects may be visualized. X-ray films may also show other problems, such as increased abdominal gas, or a perforation of the intestines.



Keep balloon strings and curtain cords out of reach of young children. Latex rubber balloons are not recommended for children under five years of age. Mylar balloons are safer for younger children.

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To be sure that the swallowed object has passed through, you should check your child's bowel movements. Each bowel movement must be passed through a sieve. If the child has been potty trained, place a basin fashioned of window screening in the toilet bowl. Then, after the child has passed a stool, wash it through the screening with hot water.

Some objects may cause stretching of your child's rectum, and a little bleeding.

There are no medicines, foods, or drinks that speed up the passage of swallowed objects. Some doctors recommend eating foods that increase the size of your child's stool, such as roughage, in an attempt to ease the passing of the swallowed object.

Swallowed Objects

Symptoms

- If the object went into your child's stomach, there may be no symptoms
- Inability to breathe or cry
- Gagging or choking
- Pain in his throat or chest

Difficulty Swallowing

- Abdominal pain
- Vomiting

Treatment

- If your child is choking, follow steps for choking
- If your child is in pain, seek immediate medical help