

# Children and magnets have a dangerous attraction, end up in the ER

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Cases involving children ingesting magnets quintupled between 2002 and 2011, with ingestion of multiple magnets generally resulting in more serious outcomes, including emergency surgery. The results of a study documenting a rapid rise in pediatric injuries was published online yesterday in *Annals of Emergency Medicine*.

"It is common for children to put things in their mouth and nose, but the risk of intestinal damage increases dramatically when multiple magnets are swallowed," said lead study author Jonathan Silverman, MD, of the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Washington in Seattle, Wash. "The [ingestion](#) of multiple magnets can severely damage intestinal walls to the point that some kids need surgery. The magnets in question were typically those found in kitchen gadgets or desk toys marketed to adults but irresistible to children."

Over a 10-year period, 22,581 [magnetic](#) foreign body injuries were reported among children. Between 2002 and 2003, incidence of injury was 0.57 cases per 100,000 children; between 2010 and 2011, that jumped to 3.06 cases per year out of 100,000 children. The majority of the cases occurred in 2007 or later.

In cases where children ingested multiple magnets, 15.7 percent were admitted to the hospital (versus 2.3 percent of single magnet ingestions). Nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of magnets were swallowed; twenty-one percent were ingested through the nose. Nearly one-quarter (23.4 percent) of the case reports described the magnets as "tiny," or other

variants on the word "small."

"The injuries were not restricted to small children either," said Dr. Silverman. "There were proportionally more nasal injuries involving older children, possibly because strong, attractive magnets are being used to imitate nose, tongue, lip or cheek piercings. Parents need to be aware of the serious risk these rare-earth magnets pose if swallowed."

**More information:** "Rise in Pediatric Magnet-Related Foreign Bodies Requiring Emergency Care" [www.annemergmed.com/webfiles/i...als/ymem/FA-5572.pdf](http://www.annemergmed.com/webfiles/ias/ymem/FA-5572.pdf)

Provided by American College of Emergency Physicians

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