

# Case study of a teenage boy who swallowed 21 disc magnets

November 7 2023, by Bob Yirka

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Doctors at Guthrie Healthcare System, in Sayre, Pennsylvania, have documented a case of a teenage boy who swallowed 21 disc magnets. In their paper [published](#) in *BMJ Case Reports*, the medical team describes how they found the magnets, removed them, and cared for the boy afterward.

Prior research and anecdotal evidence by [doctors](#) and other medical personnel has shown that swallowing magnets can be harmful. Their [magnetic field](#) and caustic properties can lead to damage in the digestive tract. In this new study, the researchers report that a teenage boy was transferred to their facility from another hospital with metal objects of some kind in his stomach. When asked, the boy told the medical staff at both hospitals that he did not know how the objects could have wound up in this stomach.

X-rays and a CT scan showed the presence of multiple metallic items. An initial procedure involved removing three small discs that had become embedded in the stomach wall using forceps and a surgical net. After removal, the doctors determined that the metal objects were small disc magnets.

Three more of the magnets had become embedded in the walls of the large intestine—notably, there were also signs that the wound caused by the discs had led to decay of intestinal tissue.

Further investigation showed that there were another 15 magnets embedded in various parts of both the large and [small intestine](#), most of which required surgery for removal. The surgeon noted that some of the magnets had begun to create holes in the intestinal walls.

The case study team notes that the dangers of ingesting magnets are well known. Instead of passing harmlessly through the [digestive tract](#), they become embedded in the walls of organs, causing tissue decay. They also note that the boy in their [case study](#) was lucky in the sense that pain caused by the magnets had brought him to the hospital before any of the magnets had time to burrow all the way through organ walls. Leakage of material from the stomach or intestines into other parts of the body can be deadly due to infection.

**More information:** Simona Maksimyan et al, Clinical course and management of an unknown multiple-magnet ingestion in a teenage male, *BMJ Case Reports* (2023). [DOI: 10.1136/bcr-2023-256418](https://doi.org/10.1136/bcr-2023-256418)

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