

Keeping kids safe from swallowing items

By **StatePoint Media**

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Curious children will put anything in their mouths. But many household items can be deadly when swallowed.

One of the most dangerous hidden hazards for children is powerful magnets. Unlike those typically found on refrigerators, magnets in children's toys and even in desk toys marketed for adults can be extremely powerful. When swallowed, these magnets can attract one another internally, resulting in serious injuries, such as small holes in the stomach and intestines, intestinal blockage, blood poisoning and even death.

"It's critical to educate children, adolescents, and their parents about keeping small, powerful magnets out of young children's hands and mouths," said Robert W. Block, MD, FAAP, 2011-2012 president of the **American Academy of Pediatrics** (AAP).

While the Consumer Product Safety Commission has worked with the toy industry to pass standards to prevent magnets from detaching from toys, parents should always check toys for magnets to ensure that if present, they are secure. Discard any toys that cannot be fixed and never let children under 6 play unsupervised with magnetic toys. Products labeled for users age 14 and up do not have to comply with the toy safety standard, so parents must be especially vigilant about keeping them well out of children's reach. Teach your children never to put magnets in their mouths.

According to the AAP, common abdominal symptoms, such as pain, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea could be a sign magnets were swallowed. Be sure to seek medical attention immediately if these symptoms occur.

Magnets aren't the only items children are putting in their mouths. In 2010, more than 3,400 children swallowed lithium button batteries, according to the National Capital Poison Center. Tears in the esophagus and internal bleeding are some of the common injuries associated with swallowing batteries. Keep loose and spare batteries locked away and store any product that uses button batteries out of reach.

In addition, child-proof your medicine cabinet. It's easy to mistake a dangerous pill for a delicious piece of candy. Lock away your medicine and throw out any old and unnecessary pills. If you suspect your child ingested medication, call Poison Help immediately: 1-800-222-1222.

A child's curiosity can be dangerous. Take the necessary precautions to prevent these situations and be sure you are prepared for anything.

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