

Girl survives after swallowing 37 magnets

thestar.com/news/world/2012/03/05/girl_survives_after_swallowing_37_magnets.html

March 5, 2012



A 3-year-old girl in Portland, Ore. is recovering after surgery to remove 37 magnets she had swallowed.

Oregon's KPTV reported Payton Bushnell had complained to her parents about stomach pain. At first, Aaron and Kelli Bushnell thought it was a stomach ache. But her symptoms kept up, and an X-ray at Children's Hospital on the weekend revealed a circular grouping of magnets.

The high-powered magnets, called Buckyballs, reportedly snapped together inside her, pinching Payton's intestines and punching one hole in her stomach and three in her intestine, according to KPTV. Payton's parents say she may have mistaken the small metallic balls for the edible toppings used to decorate cupcakes.

"If we had any idea what those magnets could have done to our daughter's intestines, I would have never had them in our house," Kelli Bushnell told KPTV.

The accidental ingestion of high-powered magnets by children has been on the rise in recent years, said Kim Dulic, a spokesperson for the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Most of the magnets are so small it's difficult to notice if one or two go missing in a sofa or on the floor. People often experience flu-like symptoms within a few days of ingesting them.

“The popularity of these products is growing, and it’s resulting in an increasing amount of incidents,” said Dulic.

One incident was reported in 2009, seven in 2010 and 14 through October 2011. The ages of the children involved ranged from 18 months to 15 years. Eleven required surgical removal of the magnets.

In response to the rise in accidental ingestions, Craig Zucker, CEO of Maxfield and Oberton, which manufactures Buckyballs, said, “High-powered magnets, such as Buckyballs, are products for adult use only and should be kept away from all children.”

The CPSC also warns that the growing popularity of high-powered magnetic tongue rings and lip piercings puts teenagers who have them at risk.

“We’ve found that a lot of teens are getting these at school, so parents should be sure to notify their teens as to what’s happening with these products,” said Dulic. “They can just be really dangerous.”

Button-size batteries, found in remote controls, toys, calculators and bathroom scales, are also being accidentally swallowed.

“The difference between magnets and these batteries is that you can see symptoms within two hours of swallowing (a battery),” said Dulic. “It burns the esophagus and it can start soon after.”

Star wire services