



From: Ron Kirschner, MD, Medical Director  
To: ALL HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS  
Subject: Not your grandmother's refrigerator magnet  
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- Rare earth magnets containing neodymium are at least 5 times stronger than conventional magnets.
- Small powerful magnet sets such as Bucky Balls became popular novelty items in the mid-2000s.
- When multiple magnets are ingested by a child, they can attract each other from separate loops of bowel, leading to intestinal obstruction or necrosis of underlying tissue.
- The risk is to small children, as well as older children who may use the magnets to mimic lip or tongue piercings and swallow them inadvertently.
- After increasing reports of serious injuries and one death in 2012, the Consumer Products Safety Commission issued a recall of these magnet sets.
- In November a US court of appeals overturned the CPSC rule restricting importation of magnets.
- Small neodymium magnet sets are now available on the internet and may be popular as holiday gifts.
- When magnet ingestion is suspected, chest/abdominal films should be obtained (at least 2 views).
- It may be difficult to distinguish a single magnet from 2 or more adherent magnets on plain film unless multiple views are obtained.
- If >1 magnet is seen, endoscopic removal is recommended when in the stomach or esophagus.
- If multiple magnets are seen beyond the stomach, close observation (preferably in the hospital) with serial films and pediatric GI or surgery consultation is recommended.



#### References

Kramer RE. Management of ingested foreign bodies in children. *J Pediatr Gastroenterol Nutr* 2015; 60: 562.  
Silverman JA. Increase in pediatric magnet-related foreign bodies requiring emergency care. *Ann Emerg Med* 2013; 62: 604.

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