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Dirt - swallowing

This article is about poisoning from swallowing or eating dirt.

This is for information only and not for use in the treatment or management of an actual poison exposure. If you or someone you are with has an exposure, call the local emergency number (such as 911), or the local poison control center can be reached directly by calling the national toll-free Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) from anywhere in the United States.

Poisonous Ingredient

There are no specific poisonous ingredients in dirt. But dirt might contain chemicals that kill insects or plants, fertilizers, parasites, bacterial toxins (poisons), fungi (mold), or animal or human waste.

Symptoms

Swallowing dirt may cause constipation or a blockage in the intestines. These can cause stomach pain, which may be severe. If there are contaminants in the soil, these substances may also cause symptoms.

Before Calling Emergency

Have this information ready:

- The age, weight, and present condition of the person who swallowed the dirt
- The time it was swallowed
- The amount swallowed

Poison Control

Your local poison control center can be reached directly by calling the national toll-free Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) from anywhere in the United States. They will give you further instructions.

This is a free and confidential service. All local poison control centers in the United States use this national number. You should call if you have any questions about poisoning or poison prevention. It does NOT need to be an emergency. You can call for any reason, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What to Expect at the Emergency Room

The person may not need to go to the emergency room. If they do go, treatment may include:

- Blood and urine tests
- Intravenous fluids (through a vein)
- Medicines to treat symptoms
- Tube placed down the nose and into the stomach (if the intestines are blocked)
- X-rays

Outlook (Prognosis)

Recovery is very likely unless the dirt contains something that can cause health problems.

References

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Updated by: Jesse Borke, MD, CPE, FAAEM, FACEP, Attending Physician at Kaiser Permanente, Orange County, CA. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

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