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Foreign body in the nose

This article discusses first aid for a foreign object placed into the nose.

Considerations

Curious young children may insert small objects into their nose in a normal attempt to explore their own bodies. Objects placed in the nose may include food, seeds, dried beans, small toys (such as marbles), crayon pieces, erasers, paper wads, cotton, beads, button batteries, and disc magnets.

A foreign body in a child's nose can be there for a while without a parent being aware of the problem. The object may only be discovered when visiting your health care provider to find the cause of irritation, bleeding, infection, or difficulty breathing.

Symptoms

Symptoms that your child may have a foreign body in his or her nose include:

- Difficulty breathing through the affected nostril
- Feeling of something in the nose
- Foul-smelling or bloody nasal discharge
- Irritability, particularly in infants
- Irritation or pain in the nose

First Aid

First aid steps include:

- Have the person breathe through the mouth. The person should not breathe in sharply. This may force the object in further.
- Gently press and close the nostril that does not have the object in it. Ask the person to blow gently. This may help push the object out. Avoid blowing the nose too hard or repeatedly.
- If this method fails, get medical help.

DO NOT

- Do not search the nose with cotton swabs or other tools. This may push the object further into the nose.

- Do not use tweezers or other tools to remove an object that is stuck deep inside the nose.
- Do not try to remove an object that you cannot see or one that is not easy to grasp. This can push the object farther in or cause damage.

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Get medical help right away for any of the following:

- The person cannot breathe well
- Bleeding occurs and continues for more than 2 or 3 minutes after you remove the foreign object, despite placing gentle pressure on the nose
- An object is stuck in both nostrils
- You cannot easily remove an object from the person's nose
- The object is sharp, is a button battery, or two paired disc magnets (one in each nostril)
- You think an infection has developed in the nostril where the object is stuck

Prevention

Prevention measures may include:

- Cut food into appropriate sizes for small children.
- Discourage talking, laughing, or playing while food is in the mouth.
- Do not give foods such as hot dogs, whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, or hard candy to children under age 3.
- Keep small objects out of the reach of young children.
- Teach children to avoid placing foreign objects into their noses and other body openings.

Alternative Names

Something stuck in the nose; Objects in the nose

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