

A case of impaction of an ingested foreign body in the appendix

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Case report

An 11 month old boy was admitted with a history of accidental ingestion of a foreign body (FB). X-ray of the abdomen showed an open safety pin in the right lower quadrant. Serial radiographs showed a fixed position in the right lower abdomen.

In view of the fixed position of the sharp object on serial x-rays, exploratory laparotomy was done. The appendix was opened longitudinally away from base, the safety pin was retrieved and formal appendectomy was completed. The postoperative course was uneventful.

Discussion

FBs in the appendix are uncommon, one study showing a frequency of 0.005% in 13,228 patients¹. Usually ingested FBs pass through the alimentary tract spontaneously². Sometimes, ingested FBs may remain dormant within an appendix for extended periods without inciting an inflammatory response³. However, cases of FB-induced appendicitis have been documented⁴. Sharp and pointed objects are more likely to cause perforations and abscesses⁵. However, reported incidence of bowel perforation is less than 1%⁵. When a FB becomes incarcerated in appendix, even if asymptomatic, a prophylactic appendectomy is recommended to prevent appendicitis⁶.

Needles⁷, metallic screw⁸ and hazel nut⁹ have been reported to be causes of FB appendicitis in children. In a series of 217 cases of appendiceal FBs reviewed by Balch and Silver, pins were found to be the most common¹. In our patient, an open safety pin was impacted in the appendix and a prophylactic appendectomy done during exploratory laparotomy.

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