

Figure 1. Lateral neck radiograph demonstrating 2 round radiopaque objects in the region of the vallecular (arrow).

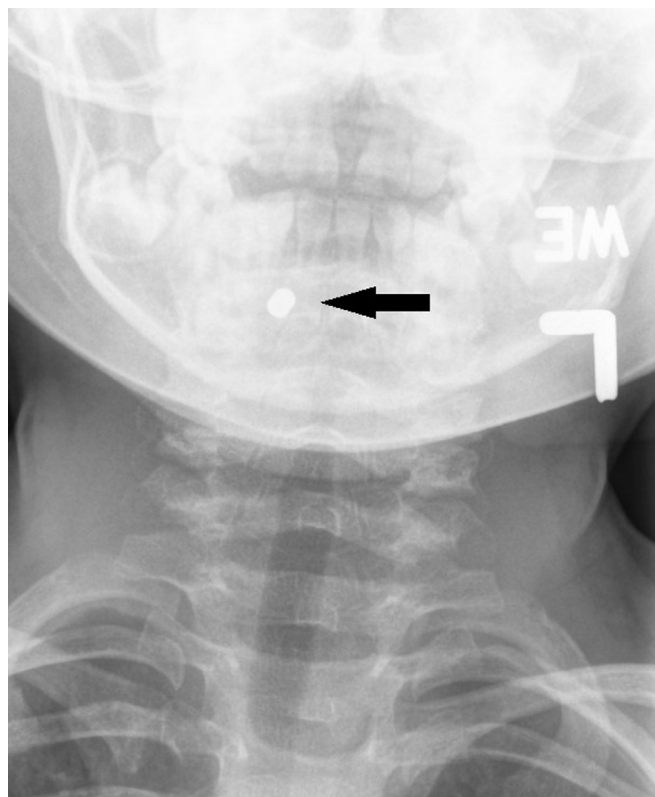


Figure 2. Anterior neck radiograph demonstrating 2 round radiopaque objects in region of vallecular (arrow).

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A 2-year-old boy was noted by his mother to suddenly begin crying, choking, and drooling, and attempting to reach into his mouth and throat while sitting in his car seat. Several small, BB-sized, round magnets were noted in his hand. He was driven to the emergency department, and on arrival, his symptoms had resolved. On examination, he was in no distress, was without stridor, and had normal vital signs. His oropharynx was clear, without apparent abrasions or visualized foreign body. Radiographs of the neck were obtained (Figures 1 and 2).

For the diagnosis and teaching points, see page 170.

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DIAGNOSIS:

Magnetic foreign bodies attached to the epiglottis. Toy magnets have become an increasing public health hazard for young children.¹ Ingested single magnets often pass without consequence; however, ingestion of multiple magnets can result in significant morbidity, including bowel perforation, obstruction, and death.² Pressure necrosis of mucosal tissue involving the aerodigestive tract can develop rapidly if not promptly recognized and removed. Involvement of the upper aerodigestive tract is rare and most instances occur gastrointestinally.³

The patient was taken to the operating room, where he underwent general anesthesia for direct laryngoscopy; 2 magnets were visualized, attached on both sides of his epiglottis. His airway was secured with a cuffed endotracheal tube, and with a rigid bronchoscope, the magnets were successfully grasped with optical forceps. The patient had no complications or residual injury to the airway and was symptom free at follow-up 1 week later.

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