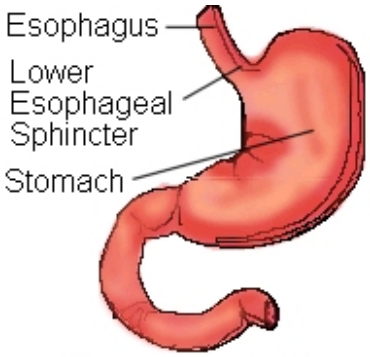
Esophageal Obstruction
(Acute, Sudden Onset)

You or your child has been diagnosed as having a foreign body in the esophagus. The esophagus is the food tube leading from the mouth to the stomach. This foreign body may be anything that is swallowed from food to coins. If a soft piece of food or small coin such as a penny or dime has become stuck in the esophagus, it will often pass into the stomach over several minutes to a few hours time. An x-ray may be taken to confirm this. X-rays are especially helpful with young children who cannot give a good history or explain their problem. The first sign of a problem is:



Esophagus & Stomach

- The child is not eating or drinking normally if at all.
- The child has suddenly started coughing.

TREATMENT

Your caregiver may give you a mild sedative or pain medication to help you to relax. This will allow the obstruction to pass. In this case you may be observed or allowed to go home, returning to your caregiver after a specified length of time if waiting is not successful. **Important:** Follow up as recommended by your caregiver. You or your child may have been referred to a specialist. The failure to keep appointments could lead to a worsening of your or your child's condition and may result in permanent disability, chronic pain, or death.

If, in your caregiver's experience, it is decided that this obstruction will not pass or the discomfort is too great, they may recommend *esophagoscopy* to remove the obstruction. In this procedure a tube is passed down the throat and into the esophagus. This is done so the foreign object can be removed. This is usually a safe, low risk procedure. It is performed under a mild sedative and some local anesthesia to numb your throat. A general anesthetic is often required for children.

If it is determined that you or your child has swallowed a battery, **this is a surgical emergency.** Even if the battery is able to pass into the stomach, these are extremely corrosive and can rapidly lead to perforation of the esophagus, stomach or bowel. **If this happens it can be fatal**. Act immediately if you observe this to happen. TIME IS CRITICAL.

If your caregiver has allowed you to go home for observation return as instructed.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOU:

- Develop pain in your chest.
- Develop chills and/or an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), or as your caregiver suggests.
- Vomit up blood or coffee ground appearing material.
- Are unable to eat or drink normally.

Do not drink hot beverages while your throat or mouth is numb following esophagoscopy.

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