Vaginal Foreign Body

There are many objects that are made to be placed in the vagina for contraception, to control bleeding during a menstrual period and medical treatment. Others are not, and are put in the vagina by accident or on purpose. The objects found in the vagina are referred to as “foreign bodies.”

Vaginal foreign bodies are most commonly seen in children. Adolescent girls and adult women are usually found to have forgotten a tampon, part of a contraceptive sponge or latex from a broken condom in the vagina. There may be a FB from a sexual stimulating device or at times an object is found in the vagina from sexual abuse.

SYMPTOMS

- There may not be symptoms noticed for a couple of days, especially with small objects.
- Vaginal bleeding.
- Vaginal discharge with or without a bad odor.
- Vaginal itching.
- Pain, redness, swelling or a rash may develop in and around the vaginal opening.
- Painful urination.
- Abdominal pain especially with a large object or an object that made a hole in (*perforated*) the vagina and ended up in the abdomen.
- Vaginal infection after the FB is removed.

COMPLICATIONS

- A serious life threatening blood infection (*toxic shock syndrome*).
- A pelvic puss-filled pocket (*abscess*) may form.
- Recurrent vaginal infections.
- Perforation of the vagina by the FB.

DIAGNOSIS

A diagnosis is made by taking a detailed history, sometimes difficult to do with children. Examination alone by your caregiver usually determines the presence of a FB. Sometimes tests are necessary, such as:

- X-ray.
- Ultrasound.
- CT scan.
- Vaginal cultures for infection.
- Blood tests.

TREATMENT

- The only treatment necessary usually is to remove the FB. Do not try to remove the FB yourself unless it is easily felt and grasped because you may push it farther in the vagina or injure the vagina.
- Treatment of a vaginal infection with antibiotic pills and/or vaginal cream if it is present or occurs later.
- If the FB is large or has been in the vagina for a long period of time it may be necessary to remove it by giving the person anesthesia.
- Hospitalization may be necessary if the person has toxic shock.
- Surgery is necessary when there is a pelvic abscess or the FB penetrated the vagina and is in the pelvis or abdomen.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Teach your children about their body parts.
- Teach them to wipe from front to back.

- **Do not** leave tampons in place for more than 6 to 8 hours. Do not wear them to bed (use a sanitary pad when asleep).
- **Do not** place foreign objects in the vagina for sexual activities.
- **Do not** douche. It is not necessary to douche to clean the vagina.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You think your child placed a FB in her vagina.
- You think you left a tampon, sponge or broken condom in the vagina.
- You develop a foul smelling vaginal discharge.
- You develop vaginal bleeding, pain or swelling.
- You develop swelling, redness or rash on the outside of the vagina.
- You develop pain with urination.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop an unexplained oral temperature of 100º F (37.8º C) or more.
- You develop chills, weakness or pass out.
- You develop abdominal pain.
- You develop a red rash on the palms of your hands and feet.
- You have a convulsion.
- You develop vomiting and diarrhea.

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