

ALERT STATUS: **RED**

Description: Ball Magnets

Date: 09/06/2021

Background

Over the past few years there has been concern raised regarding the use by young children of magnetic balls that are sold as toys, decorative items and fake tongue piercings (a magnet is placed either side of the tongue to simulate a piercing) online.

Please note this picture is only one example of this item they come in various forms.

Children are playing with the balls and putting them into their mouths.

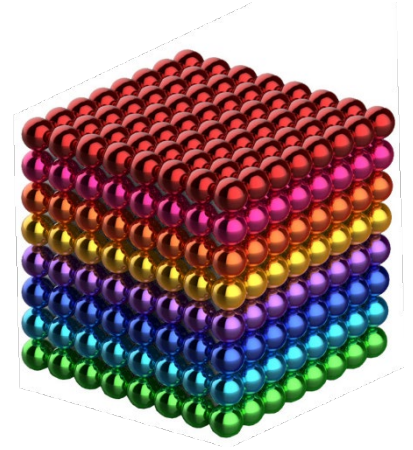
The main problem is that the magnets continue to work even once inside the body and can stick to each other and can cause severe damage to the digestive tract. As the balls move through the bowel they can magnetise together even when in different parts of the bowel, potentially causing bowel perforation or intestinal blockage. The pressure applied to the bowel tissue between the two or more magnets is so strong that it can cause a perforation in the bowel. This is extremely serious and could be fatal if not identified and promptly managed.

Though the magnets are widely available in stores and online in the UK, they are not a banned item as they are in some countries – Canada/Australia and New Zealand

There is pressure on the government to ban these items and an NHS Alert was published by the MHRA on the 19th May 2021 which states:

'Small powerful magnets, also known as neodymium or 'super strong' rare earth magnets, are sold as toys, decorative items, and fake piercings. If more than one 'super-strong' magnet is swallowed separately, or a super strong magnet is swallowed with a metallic object, then they can be strongly attracted together from different parts of the intestines. This compression of bowel tissue can cause necrosis and perforation of the intestines and/or blood vessels within hours. Therefore, urgent assessment and treatment is vital'.

Any child who has ingested (or are suspected of ingesting) any of these super-strong magnets should be taken straight away to an Emergency Department as a medical emergency.



Please ensure that if you have some of these magnetic balls they should be kept well away from children.

Source:
BBC, NHS, Safetyalerts@mhra.gov.uk