

FACTSHEET



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Small high powered magnets

What are small high powered magnets?

Small high powered magnets are 5mm ball magnets that have a much stronger attraction than is allowed in other small magnets ([Consumer Protection Notice No. 5 of 2012](#).) They are more powerful than everyday magnets like fridge magnets. These magnets use their magnetic strength to create shapes and are marketed to adults as desk and stress relief toys.



Are small high powered magnets dangerous?

Due to their strength, these high powered magnets are dangerous. If a child swallows two or more magnets or a magnet and another metallic object, the attraction between them pulls them towards each other inside the body. This can cause infection, obstruction and holes in any tissue that gets caught between them. Emergency endoscopy or surgery is needed to remove them and prevent significant injury. If you think that your child has

swallowed magnets, go immediately to your nearest emergency department.

Who is at risk?

Young children are most at risk as they explore their environment and place many small objects in their mouths. Most small objects will pass through their digestive system with little or no damage.

Teenagers are also at risk, as some teens use two magnets to mimic piercings by placing one on the cheek and the other in their mouth or on their tongue.

As the magnets are tiny, they can easily be swallowed. Their small size makes it possible for more than one to be swallowed at once. When ingested, these can cause serious and life-long complications.

How common are these injuries?

During the period from January 2019 to June 2020, 11 children were admitted to the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network for treatment.

What are the symptoms in a child who has swallowed a magnet?

Children may not show any symptoms at first. It may be hours or even days before dangerous symptoms are noticed. Some early symptoms include:

- Gagging or choking
- Drooling

More dangerous symptoms that may present later:

- Abdominal pain, discomfort or cramps
- Vomiting

How is a swallowed magnet diagnosed?

Your child may need an x-ray to check whether a single or multiple magnets were swallowed, and also to find where they are in the digestive tract.

Is there a law or Australian Standard?

Consumer protection law states that all toys for children 36 months and under in Australia must comply with the Australian Standard AS/NZS ISO 8124.1:2019 - Safety of toys. Part 1: Safety aspects related to mechanical and physical properties.

A [permanent ban](#) on small, high powered magnets came into effect in November 2012. It applies to separable or loose magnets which:

- are small enough to fit into the small parts cylinder
- have magnetic flux (the total magnetic field which passes through a given area) of 50 or more
- are marketed as
 - a toy, game or puzzle
 - a construction or modelling kit
 - jewellery to be worn in or around the mouth or nose.

How can you prevent children from swallowing magnets?

As these small high powered magnets are banned in Australia, their access is only through purchases made overseas or online. As they are extremely dangerous, we recommended that you do not purchase them. There are many other stress relief toys that can be purchased that do not pose the same risks.

Make sure that your home and those that your children visit do not contain small high powered magnets.

Remember:

- Injuries caused by small high powered magnets are serious
- Remove any small high powered magnets from your home or office
- If you think that your child has swallowed magnets, go to your nearest emergency department
- Share this information with friends and family