UPCC UPDATE

PEDIATRIC COIN INGESTIONS

Problem: Between January 2005 and March 2006, the Utah Poison Control Center (UPCC) was involved in the care of 7 children, ages 8 months – 7 years, who swallowed a coin, were initially asymptomatic and subsequently were found to have the coin lodged in their esophagus. This represents a rate of “asymptomatic” esophageal coins of 7%!

Scope of the Problem: Coins are a common foreign body ingested by children. Coins were involved in 260 (1%) of all exposures reported to the UPCC in children less than 6 years of age in 2005. While the majority of children who swallow coins pass them without problem, a few children who are asymptomatic are eventually found to have the coin lodged in the esophagus. Delayed removal of an esophageal coin entails the risk of anesthesia and perforation.

Solution: All symptomatic pediatric coin ingestions are currently referred immediately to the closest emergency department for evaluation. All asymptomatic pediatric coin ingestions are referred to an emergency clinic or emergency department for localization of the coin within 12-24 hours of the ingestion. Coins in the stomach generally pass without problems. No further follow-up from the UPCC will be performed in children who have coins localized in the stomach.

Risk of radiograph? The risk of a single chest x-ray is minimal. The amount of natural radiation we are exposed to in a year is equivalent to approximately 10 chest x-rays.