

Accidental Ingestion

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History

2 year old with accidental ingestion.

Diagnosis

Accidental Ingestion

Additional Clinical

Fish tank thermometer broke in patient's mouth.

Discussion

The small silvery ball of mercury in a thermometer is very toxic if released into the environment and can cause serious health problems for humans and wildlife. When mercury is released, it evaporates into the air and eventually makes its way back to the earth, often into rivers and lakes, where microorganisms transform it into highly toxic methylmercury.

The American Academy of Pediatric supported the ban of mercury based fever thermometers in 2001. The purpose of restricting or completely banning the sale of certain mercury-added products is to eliminate non-essential uses of mercury in consumer, household, and commercial products, thereby reducing mercury releases to the environment associated with the production, use and disposal of such products.

The liquid in modern thermometers is usually a colored oil or alcohol and not mercury. It is interesting however that some fish tank thermometers contain tiny lead beads at the bottom to keep them upright in the water. Consequently, the tiny radio-opacities in this case represent acute ingestion of lead.

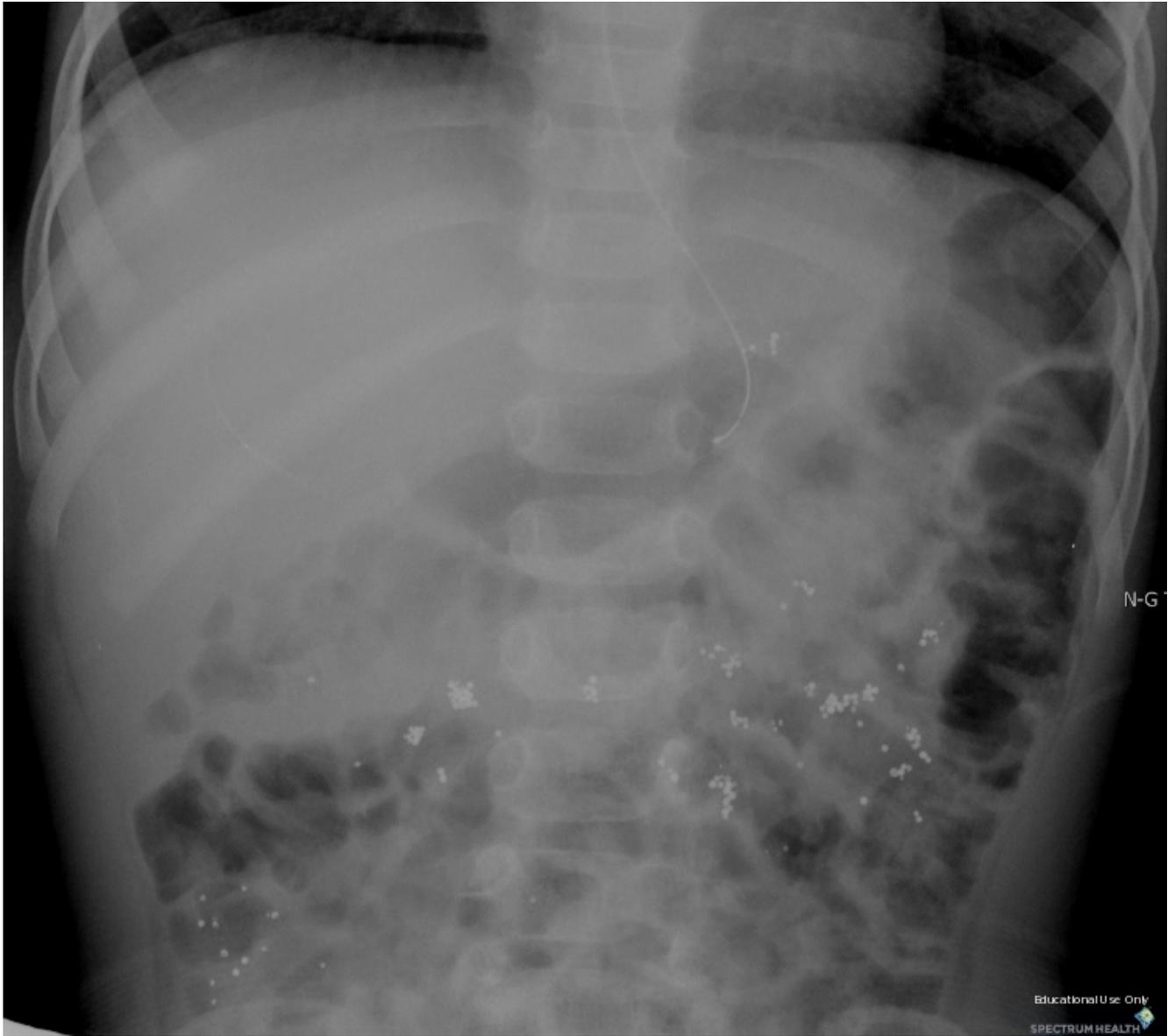
Follow up radiographs to document clearance of the particles is recommended.

Findings

CR-Numerous tiny round metallic foreign bodies in the bowel (radiographs are temporally separated by 8 hours).



DR



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