BRITISH JOURNAL OF HOSPITAL MEDICINE

Perforation of terminal ileum by a toothpick

Ozkan Ozen[1]
Ebru Torun[1]
Yavuz Yuksel[1]
Tarkan Ergun[1]
Ismail Basaran[2]

Author details can be found at the end of this article

Correspondence to:
Ozkan Ozen; ozkan.ozen@alanya.edu.tr

The ingestion of sharp foreign bodies such as toothpicks can lead to perforation of the gastrointestinal tract (Li and Ender, 2002).

A 9-year-old boy described right lower quadrant pain persisting for 3 days. Findings of acute abdomen were observed at examination. Computed tomography showed diffuse thickening compatible with oedema in the wall at the terminal ileum-ileocaecal valve level, and stranding in pericaecal fat planes (Figure 1). Coronal reformation computed tomography revealed linear weak hyperdensity in the lumen of the terminal ileum (Figure 2). No intra-abdominal free air was present. The patient did not describe swallowing a foreign body. The linear weak hyperdensity seen on computed tomography was considered to be a possible foreign body.

Figure 1. Axial plane computed tomography showing the toothpick in the lumen of the terminal ileum (long arrow), thickening in the wall of the ileum (short arrows) and contamination in fat planes around the ileum (dotted arrow).

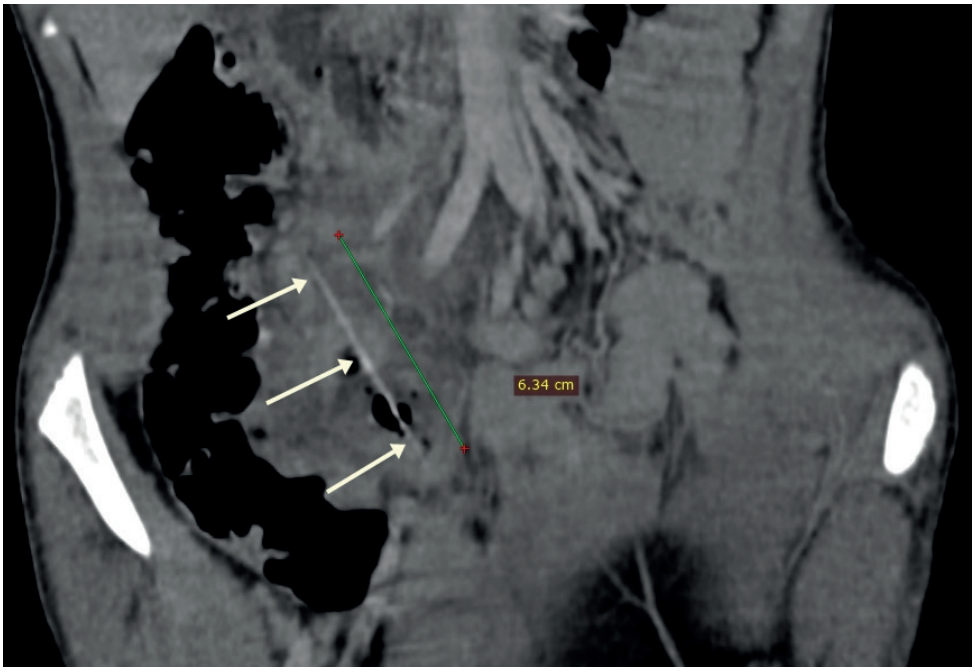

Figure 2. Reformed coronal plan computed tomography showing the linear weak density (toothpick, arrows) approximately 6.34 cm in length.

How to cite this article: Ozen O, Torun E, Yuksel Y, Ergun T, Basaran I. Perforation of the terminal ileum by a toothpick. Br J Hosp Med. 2020. https://doi.org/10.12968/hmed.2020.0078

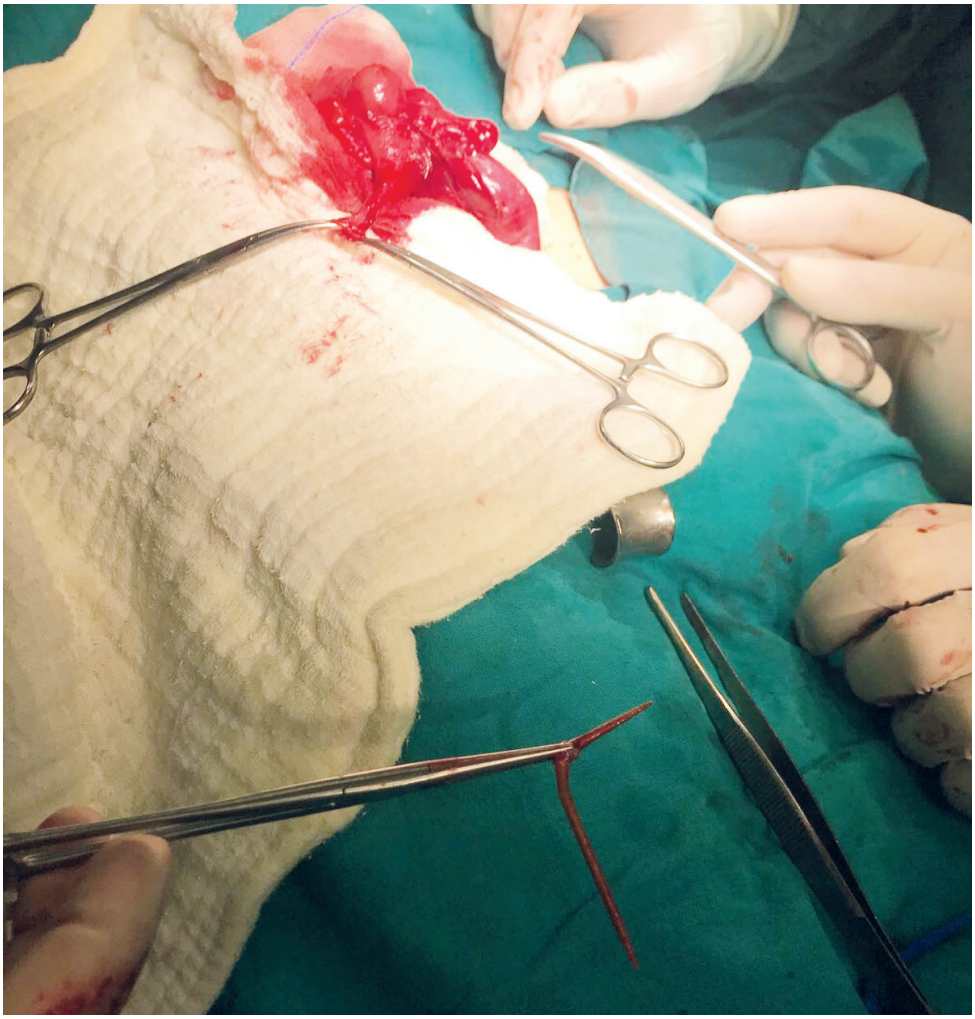

Figure 3. Removal of the toothpick during surgery.

The patient underwent surgery. A toothpick was found (Figure 3) perforating the terminal ileum and associated inflammatory changes in the surrounding fatty tissue were observed.

An ingested toothpick is unlikely to pass spontaneously through the gastrointestinal tract (Yang et al, 2017). Toothpick ingestion can be fatal if the patient is unaware of the condition, and it can be difficult to diagnose on computed tomography, endoscopy and ultrasonography (Lovece et al, 2014).

Author details

[1]Department of Radiology, Alanya Education and Research Hospital, Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat University, Alanya, Turkey

[2]Department of Pediatric Surgery, Alanya Education and Research Hospital, Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat University, Alanya, Turkey

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