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Stick stuck in stoic

Sir

I was interested to read the Case Report of A chicken bone in the rectum (Davies, 1991). As stated in the article toothpicks are not an uncommon cause of perforation of the GI tract.

The wanderlust of the ingested cocktail stick has been reported earlier as causing alarming complications and even death (Kasthuri & Savage, 1988). I describe a further brief excursion of the 'travelling tooth pick' (Cockerill *et al.*, 1983) which has now chanced upon a short cut from the digestive tract to the outside world, happily on this occasion, without causing serious injury.

A 59-year-old uncomplaining resident of a community care unit was noted to have a small inflamed swelling in the right anterior triangle of his neck which was thought to be a superficial infection. Three days after it was first noticed a foreign body appeared at the surface of the abscess. This was extracted by a nurse who found it to be the tip of an 8 cm wooden cocktail stick. This had been accidentally swallowed with a sausage five days previously. Following its removal all inflammation settled and there were no complications.

Swallowing of cocktail sticks frequently occurs because of hurried consumption of food especially when taken with alcohol. The demented and those with diminished palatal sensation due to denture wearing are at greater risk. Everyone should be made aware of the potential dangers of these unnecessary additions to food, and especially those concerned with the preparation of food in institutions. If sticks are really necessary they should be easily visible to the consumer, the standard wooden cocktail stick is all too easily disguised.

I. G. KENDALL

Registrar

Accident & Emergency Department

Basingstoke District Hospital

Basingstoke

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