

Acute anal pain and a chicken bone

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Swallowed bones impacting in the anus are a recognized cause of acute anal pain.^{1,2} Curiously, however, there has been only one previously published report of this.³

Case report

A 35-year-old man presented with acute, severe anal pain following a bowel action. His stool had been slightly loose but there had been no rectal bleeding. He was otherwise quite well and had no history of haemorrhoids, anal fissure or other perianal disease. He had eaten chicken curry 36 hours previously. Rectal examination revealed a fixed, bone-like object impacted transversely across the anus. Lignocaine gel 2% was applied to the painful mucosa impaled on the bone, and a proctoscope inserted to simultaneously dilate the anus and dislodge the bone. There was immediate relief of his symptoms. The chicken bone, which was approximately 3 cm long (Figure 1), was removed manually and proctoscopy revealed no other abnormality. The patient subsequently remained well.

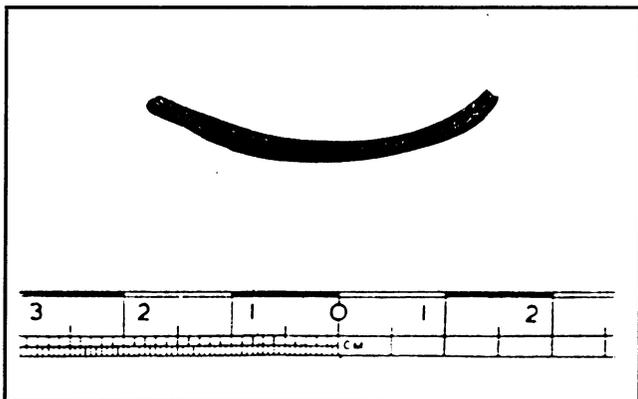


Figure 1. The chicken bone after removal.

Comment

The impaction of a swallowed bone is apparently rare in the United Kingdom, but is more common among the Chinese, possibly because of their practice of chopping meat and bones into small pieces prior to cooking. The diagnosis is suggested by the absence of constipation, rectal bleeding or previous history of perianal disease, and easily confirmed by digital examination. Removal is probably best achieved by anal dilation, either digitally, or with a proctoscope, to free one or both ends of the impacted bone. The bone can then be removed manually or with forceps via a proctoscope. Subsequent proctosigmoidoscopy is advisable to exclude lacerations or coexistent disease.

Impaction of a swallowed bone should be considered in the differential diagnosis of acute anal pain, and should serve as a reminder of the need to perform a rectal examination in every case.

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