# Cashless payment methods linked to decrease in surgical interventions for children



A shift towards cashless payment methods in the UK has coincided with a notable decrease in the number of children requiring surgical interventions to remove foreign objects lodged in their bodies, according to a comprehensive study published in The Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. The research analysed data from English hospitals covering the period from 2000 to 2022, focusing specifically on cases involving children aged 14 and under.

The analysis highlighted a significant decline in the incidence of foreign bodies being extracted from the digestive tract, respiratory tract, and nasal cavities of young patients. Between 2012, a year that marked the significant decline of cash transactions, and 2022, there was a reported 29% drop in cases, translating to a decrease from 2,405 cases in 2012 to 1,716 in 2022. Specifically, procedures to remove objects from the digestive tract fell from 708 to 513, while nasal cavity operations decreased by 484, from 1,565 to 1,081. The decline in respiratory tract procedures was less pronounced, reducing from 132 to 122.

Lead author Akash Jangan, who serves as an ear, nose, and throat registrar, remarked on the implications of the findings, stating, “Our research shows that using cashless payment methods instead of coins has potentially helped keep children safe and reduced the need for surgery. This unintended finding proves that changes in how we live can make a difference to people’s health. It also means healthcare resources can be allocated to helping patients in other ways.”

Historically, coins have been identified as one of the most commonly ingested foreign objects among children, accounting for over 75% of cases involving swallowed items in those under the age of six. The research indicates that the accessible nature and round shape of coins make them particularly likely to be ingested by small children.

In addition to the decline in surgeries related to foreign objects, the study also suggests that the financial burden associated with these procedures is considerable, estimated at approximately £2.8 million annually. However, researchers also noted that factors such as improved child-proof packaging and heightened parental awareness regarding potential hazards may have contributed to the decrease in incidents.

Despite the positive trend regarding coin ingestion, experts caution that vigilance is still necessary. Ram Moorthy, affiliated with the Royal College of Surgeons of England, noted, “It is positive that fewer children are swallowing coins. This study shows how new technology can make children safer in ways we didn’t intend, but there are still hazardous items to be aware of.” He highlighted ongoing concerns about the dangers posed by other small items like button batteries and magnets, which can also lead to serious safety risks. Moorthy emphasised the importance of ensuring that such potentially harmful objects remain out of reach of children.

The findings were first published in the academic journal last year, detailing a shift not only in payment methods but also in its broader impact on child health and safety.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://publishing.rcseng.ac.uk/doi/10.1308/rcsann.2024.0050> - This URL supports the claim that a shift towards cashless payments in the UK is associated with a decrease in the number of children requiring surgical interventions for foreign body removal.
* <https://publishing.rcseng.ac.uk/doi/pdf/10.1308/rcsann.2024.0050?download=true> - This URL provides access to the full study published in The Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, detailing the decline in foreign body removal procedures among children.
* <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38836371/> - This URL points to a summary of the study on PubMed, highlighting the significant decrease in foreign body removal procedures in the UK following the decline in cash payments.
* <https://www.ukfinance.org.uk/payment-summaries/> - Although not directly linked, UK Finance provides data and insights into payment trends in the UK, including the shift towards cashless payments that aligns with the study's findings.
* <https://www.nhs.uk/> - As the main health service provider in the UK, NHS data and resources would support claims about healthcare trends and surgical interventions for foreign body removal.
* <https://rcseng.ac.uk/> - This URL accesses the official website of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, where further academic studies and publications related to the topic might be found.
* <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/huge-drop-children-putting-coins-31298703> - Please view link - unable to able to access data