



Injury Prevention: Unintentional Foreign Body Injuries among Kentucky Youth 10 and Under

Kids naturally explore the world by touch and taste; hence, it is natural and common for them to place things in their mouth and nose. Sometimes these objects are swallowed and are passed naturally, while others obstruct breathing and cause choking and other harms that require emergency care. These objects (both food and nonfood) are called foreign bodies, as they exist outside the human body and enter through natural orifices (external body openings). Keep your kids safe by keeping small objects secured out of their reach, cutting foods to an appropriate size, and paying close attention when they are playing with smaller items.

An annual average of 2,396 emergency department (ED) visits due to unintentional foreign body injury among Kentucky youth* occurred from 2018 to 2025. The average cost of an ED visit was \$1,584.

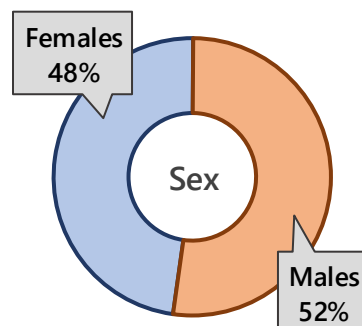
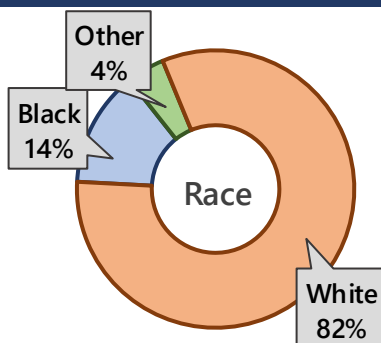
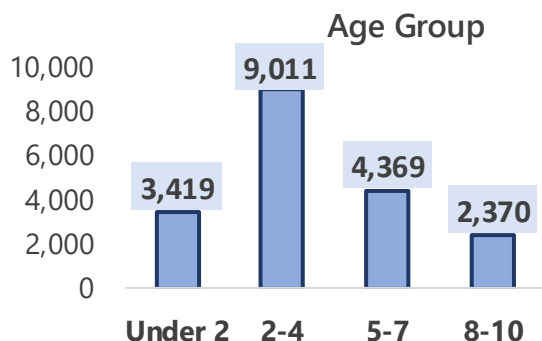
*Youth are limited to Kentucky residents 10 years of age and younger.

Unintentional Foreign Body Injury-Related ED Visits among Kentucky Youth by Year, 2018–2025¹



ED foreign body injury data for 2018–2025 show that foreign objects entered the natural orifices (31%), alimentary tract (30%), respiratory tract (21%), ears (16%), and eyes (2%).

Unintentional Foreign Body Injury-Related ED Visits among Kentucky Youth by Age Group, Race, and Sex, 2018–2025¹



Of Kentucky youth ED visits for unintentional foreign body injuries:

- **47%** were 2 to 4 years old
- **52%** were male
- **82%** were white



¹ED visits represent encounters of care and could be greater than the number of individual patients treated in Kentucky. Data source: Kentucky Outpatient Services Database, Office of Data Analytics. July 2026. Data are provisional and subject to change.

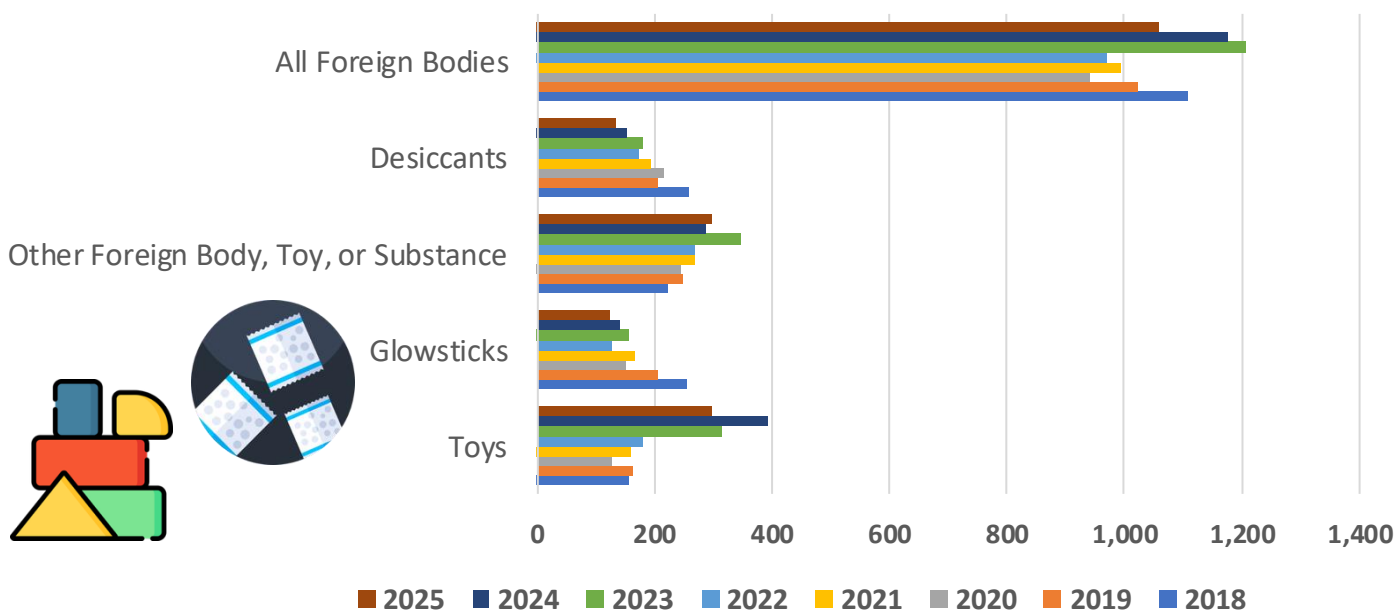
Poison Control Center Calls² Concerning Kentucky Youth Unintentional Foreign Body Exposures, 2018–2025¹



²Calls were placed either by parents, caregivers, or the youth concerning a foreign body entering into or through natural body orifices. Data are not available to differentiate by caller. Data source: Kentucky Poison Control Center call data, Kentucky Poison Control Center of Norton Children's Hospital, July 2026. Data are provisional and subject to change.

Youth foreign body-related calls to the Kentucky Poison Control Center increased approximately 28% from 2020–2023. Calls declined slightly in 2024 and 2025.

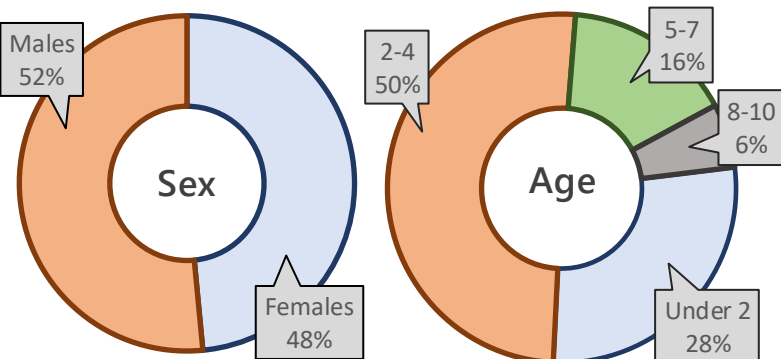
Poison Control Center Calls Concerning Kentucky Youth Unintentional Foreign Body Exposures by Foreign Body Type, 2018–2025¹



From 2018–2025, desiccants (e.g., silica gel packets), glowsticks, toys, and “other” types of foreign bodies made up approximately 80% of foreign body-related exposure calls (N=8,478) for Kentucky youth. The remaining 20% of calls concerned substances such as coins, human urine/feces, bubble-blowing solutions, soil, Christmas ornaments, incense, oxygen absorbing package inserts, thermometers, and unknown substances.

Data source: Kentucky Poison Control Center call data, Kentucky Poison Control Center of Norton Children's Hospital, July 2026. Data are provisional and subject to change.

Poison Control Center Calls Concerning Kentucky Youth Unintentional Foreign Body Exposures by Age and Sex, 2018–2025



Data source: Kentucky Poison Control Center call data, Kentucky Poison Control Center of Norton Children's Hospital, July 2026. Data are provisional and subject to change.

- Approximately **83%** of foreign body-related exposures occurred in the child's home.
- Approximately **92%** of foreign body-related exposures were managed on site.

Unintentional Foreign Body Injury Safety

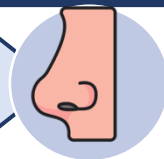
 **1-800-222-1222**

Contact Poison Control as soon as possible if you suspect a foreign body ingestion.



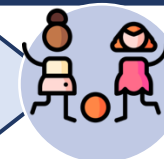
Keep small objects that may be a choking hazard, such as coins, magnets, and buttons, away from children.

Teach children not to place foreign objects in their mouth, nose, or other body openings.



Avoid giving children under three years of age high-risk foods such as nuts, uncut hotdogs, cylindrical-shaped foods, seeds, and small fruits and sweets.

Teach kids to not talk, laugh, play, run, or exercise when eating to decrease risks. Encourage them to eat slowly.



If your child swallows a foreign body and is not breathing, call 911 immediately!

Additional Resources

- Poison Control Center: www.poison.org
- CDC Choking Hazards: <https://www.cdc.gov/infant-toddler/choking-hazards.html>
- Safe Kids Worldwide: www.safekids.org/tip/choking-and-strangulation-prevention-tips

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