

CASE REPORT

Savory Satisfaction Can Lead to Lower Gastrointestinal Impaction

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Introduction:

The differential diagnosis for constipation is large and includes many common diagnoses as well as other unusual ones. Bezoars are one of the diagnostic “zebras” that we do not think of frequently. Bezoars are foreign material masses that are formed in the gastrointestinal tract following ingestion of indigestible substances. Bezoars can occur anywhere in the stomach, although they typically are found in either the stomach or the rectum. Bezoars can be made of many different substances, including hair (trichobezoar), medications (pharmacobezoars), milk (lactobezoar), and plant material (phytobezoar). We report a case of a young woman presenting with constipation who was found to have a sunflower seed bezoar.

Case Summary:

A 21 year old Caucasian woman presented initially to urgent care with a four day history of constipation and abdominal pain. The only recent change from her normal behavior was eating a large bag of un-husked sunflower seeds over a two week period of time. She had tried using laxatives and a Fleet Enema without symptomatic relief. Rectal examination revealed fecal impaction with sharp debris. Her laboratory findings were unremarkable. Abdominal x-ray noted the presence of stool in the colon. She was transferred to the inpatient setting and was given a trial with golytely and fleet enemas without success. Proctoscopy was then performed revealing a solid ball of sunflower seed husks in the rectum that was impassable even with the a colonoscope. Attempts at removal with roth nets, forceps, and other tools were unsuccessful. The patient was then taken to the operative theater for digital dis-empaction under sedation and partial removal was obtained. The remainder of the material was expunged by smog enema and additional golytely. The patient has made a full recovery.

Discussion:

In the United States, sunflower seed bezoars in adults are a rare finding. Our review of the literature, searching PubMed for sunflower seed bezoars and adults, showed less than 10 reported cases in the United States. Rectal bezoars in children have been more commonly reported.⁽¹⁾ There are many more case reports of rectal sunflower seed bezoars and other bird seed bezoars from other countries, particularly in Israel and from other countries in the middle East. The increased incidence in the Middle East is thought to be from differences in dietary preferences. One Israeli study examined the composition of 30 rectal phyto-bezoars over a 10 year period of time.⁽²⁾ Twelve were composed of prickly pear seeds, 10 from watermelon seeds, four from sunflower seeds, one from popcorn kernels, and one from pomegranate seeds.

Seed bezoars almost always occur in the rectum and nearly always require digital dis-empaction under sedation whereas seedless fecal masses do not.⁽³⁾ There have been several novel case reports of gastric seed bezoars that were successfully dissolved with Coca-Cola.⁽⁴⁻⁶⁾ The consumption of seeds without prior removal of the husks should be accompanied by the awareness that large quantities may lead to impaction.

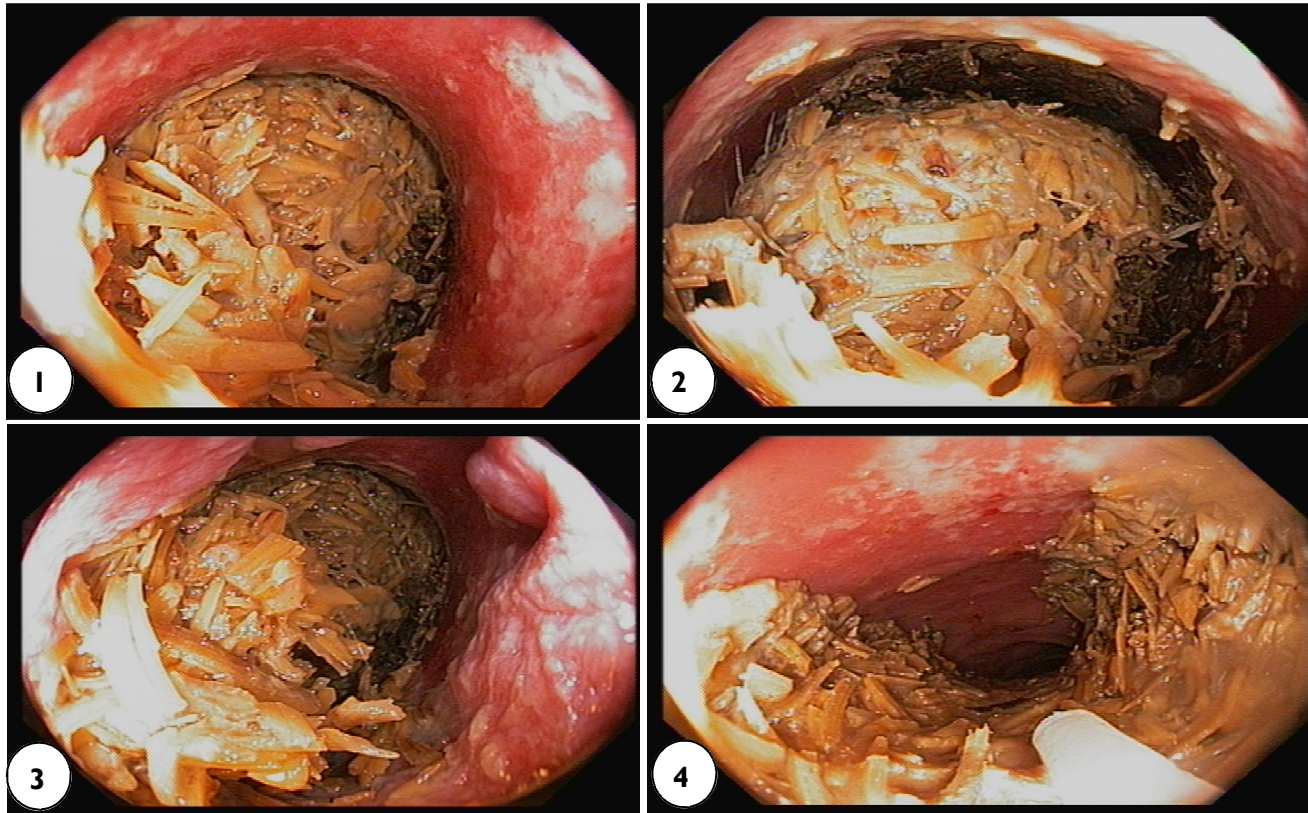


Figure1-4: Images of attempted bezoar removal with colonoscopy.

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