



# Western Health and Social Care Trust

**Press Release**  
**05 June 2008**

## **A & E Consultant raises issue of Choking Prevention**

The Western Health and Social Care Trust, today, have highlighted the danger of young children swallowing potentially dangerous items resulting in distress and even choking.

Mr Alan McKinney, a Consultant with the Western Trust working in the Accident and Emergency Department of Altnagelvin Hospital commented: “Between January of last year and May 2008, we treated more than 300 children under the age of 11, for choking related injury or swallowing potentially dangerous household items. These included poisons, jewellery, chemicals, batteries, coins and toys.”

He continued:” There is a whole range of items that children can swallow – the reality being that very small children tend to explore the world by placing things in their mouths – and it is up to adults ultimately to ensure that they do not have within their reach the small items on which they could choke or swallow and incur injury.”

Mr McKinney also highlighted: “Though none of the 300 children treated suffered any lasting injuries to date, the important thing is to realise that prevention is the way forward. The Western Trust’s Injury Prevention Initiative based at Accident and Emergency have recently given 2,500 “Choke Testers” or simulation devices to local parents groups, and worked with them to demonstrate what size an airway is and if an item fits, then it can be seen as a potential hazard. Many items not at first seen as dangerous are quite the opposite. We are trying to help parents identify and make safe those items preventing such incidents before they occur.”

**ENDS.....**

**Provided by Communications Department, phone 028 71 611188**