

Gobstopper availability

Sir, I write in reference to an article published in issue 12 of *BDJ in Practice* entitled 'A Christmas Cracker', in December 2022.¹ In the article the authors mentioned popular sweets Gobstoppers and their negative impact on teeth. From my own experience, they are not only detrimental to teeth, but also pose a serious life threat.

Just a few months ago, on a weekend afternoon I was alerted by shouting outside

'From my own experience, they are not only detrimental to teeth, but also pose a serious life threat'

my house. I went outside to discover a group of people surrounding a young girl laying on the ground, in a pool of bodily fluids. As

I was told, she was eating a Gobstopper while playing with her friends and then suddenly started choking. Thankfully, someone already called an ambulance so I swiftly began performing the choking algorithm, we all know so well from our CPR training. Unfortunately, several rounds of back blows and abdominal thrusts achieved nothing.

The girl became unresponsive and you could feel life draining away from her. CPR was necessary.

In real life, you realise it truly is a matter of life and death and that every second counts. Fortunately, the paramedics arrived quickly and were able to carry on the resuscitation successfully in the air ambulance that also arrived at the scene. Afterwards, I had an opportunity to speak to paramedics who confirmed that the Gobstopper sweet got stuck in the airway and there was no way anyone providing first aid could remove it. It was thanks to CPR and the quick ambulance response the girl survived.

I believe this serves as a very vivid examples that CPR training is necessary and it may be of use in the least expected situation. However, it also poses a perhaps even more important question of whether certain items marketed for children (in this instance Gobstoppers), are actually safe and their availability should be reconsidered.

P. Oczkowski, via email.

References

1. And finally, Gobstoppers. *BDJ In Pract* 2022; **35**: 30.



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To check in or to check up?

Sir, there has been much uproar in the media recently regarding how difficult it is to see an NHS general medical practitioner (GMP). Some have suggested that perhaps a fee should be payable by patients, similar to the NHS dental charge. However, after the COVID-19 pandemic, though NHS dentistry is attempting to return to 'normal', there still remain huge backlogs and patients who are failing to get an appointment, irrespective of whether they pay. Aside from funding issues and shortages in some areas, NHS dentists are still seeing a large amount of patients, and all appointments are carried out face to face. With a lot of GMPs currently operating a triage system, and virtual options such as video and phone call appointments available, could something similar be used in NHS dentistry?

A virtual 'check-in', as suggested by David Westgarth in 2020,¹ could be hugely valuable if implemented correctly. Many low risk patients wish to attend for a 'checkup' every six months, even if not needed. In this cohort a virtual appointment could be used between the correct recall and free up face to face appointment time for patients with higher risk or need. It could also be used to triage patients prior to emergency and consultation appointments, as well as improving access for vulnerable and anxious patients. Virtual dentistry is a vital tool which if used correctly could help to remove some of the barriers patients are facing to see an NHS dentist.



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Z. Aslam, Rotherham, via email.

References

1. Westgarth D. Covid-19 and Community Dental Services: The Challenges Ahead. *BDJ In Pract* 2020; **33**: 14-19.