

BY JOHN MUSENZE

A nine-year-old boy from Mitooma district is recovering following his discharge from Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital on May 12, after surgeons removed over 50 sewing needles and other foreign objects from his stomach.

The child, a Primary One pupil at St Luke Primary School in Kashenshero town council, had reportedly suffered severe stomach pain for nearly eight months before doctors discovered the metallic objects inside his abdomen.

Eunice Birungi, the boy's aunt and primary caretaker, said the child's condition worsened over time, especially whenever he went to the toilet.

"He would cry whenever he was pooing and the pain kept increasing. We moved to different clinics looking for help, but his condition was not improving. He told us that her stepmother

DOCTORS RESCUE BOY FORCED TO SWALLOW 50 NEEDLES

forced him to eat needles and stopped him from telling anyone," Birungi said.

The boy was first taken to Ishaka Adventist Hospital, before being referred to Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital after imaging examinations conducted at Gava Imaging Centre in Bushenyi revealed multiple foreign metallic objects inside his body.

COMPLEX OPERATION

At Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, a team of eight specialists led by paediatric surgeon Dr Eden Tilahun carried out the delicate six-hour surgery under the supervision of Dr Deus Twesigye, the acting hospital

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director and senior consultant general surgeon.

During the procedure, surgeons removed 48 sewing needles, some tied together in bundles, alongside pieces of textile material, strings and fragments of pens. When a second surgery



Surgeon: Twesigye

was conducted, two more needles were discovered and extracted.

Tilahun described the case as one of the most extraordinary surgeries the hospital has handled.

"Most of the needles were rusted, suggesting they had been inside the body for quite some time. The fact that they were many and some

were wrapped together made the case highly unusual and extraordinary," he said.

Other foreign objects were discovered in several parts of the abdomen, including the large bowel, pelvic region and loops of the small intestine.

Hospital radiographer Jonasi Agaba said X-ray scans had shown multiple bright white linear and bent structures consistent with sewing needles.

Following public shock and unanswered questions surrounding the case, medical specialists explained that although rare, it is medically possible for someone to swallow sewing needles and survive with them in the stomach for a

long period.

Dr Frank Asiimwe, a leading surgeon at Mulago Hospital, said the boy most likely swallowed the needles forcibly and not accidentally.

"It is possible for someone to swallow needles, if they are wrapped in something like paper, banana or sugarcane. The oesophagus is wide and long enough to allow objects to pass into the stomach," Asiimwe said.

Dr Robert Kalyesubula, a nephrologist and head of physiology at Makerere University College of Health Sciences, also said foreign metallic objects can remain inside the stomach for long periods.

He compared the case to bullets and coins that sometimes remain lodged in the body without immediately causing death. "If one is lucky, some of these objects can painfully pass out during defecation. The major danger comes if a needle pierces a major blood vessel," Kalyesubula said.