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Things Not to Put in Your Mouth

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Things Not to Put in Your Mouth

Abstract
a penny a quarter a button a paperclip

safety pins, closed and open

most ingested while changing diapers

In two shadow boxes, Dr. James Downing displayed the objects

he’d extracted from patients’ food and air passages

between 1929 and 1956...

Disciplines
Poetry

Comments
Things Not to Put in Your Mouth

-Medical Display, Iowa State Historical Museum, Des Moines, Iowa

a penny a quarter a button a paperclip
  safety pins, closed and open
  most ingested while changing diapers

In two shadow boxes, Dr. James Downing displayed the objects
  he'd extracted from patients' food and air passages
  between 1929 and 1956.

a wishbone a kernel of com (overlarge) a pen nib
  beads from a necklace with the string still attached
  a nail a screw a cover from a bottle of Anacin

Thumbtacked in rows, suspended in glassine envelopes
  the objects floated in glass cases, a warning
  about things not to put in your mouth.

a toothpick a rhinestone earring a metal snap
  a long sewing needle a cocklebur seed, spikey as a porcupine
  many small chicken bones

The exhibit includes the doctor's leather medical bag
  and his instruments of extraction a tracheal dilator
  a uvula dilator laryngeal and esophageal forceps

with a humorous note, jotted in a hospital report,
  "feed her anything but nickels and pennies"
  beside the nickel extracted from the child's throat.