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Head Line: Docs Save Boy From Whistle Shame.

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# Docs save boy from whistle shame

STAFF REPORTER

A boy from West Midnapore, battling unwanted attention after he swallowed a whistle and started whistling whenever he tried to speak, was saved further embarrassment by doctors at a private hospital in the city last month.

Back in Calcutta for a check-up on Thursday the shy nine-year-old said that everyone else found it very amusing when words came out of his mouth interspersed with sharp notes from the whistle that had got lodged in his left lung. No one, he says, cared a jot for how embarrassed he felt.

"From morning to night, people would come to see me. I felt very uncomfortable and would try to hide somewhere," said Hibjul Ali Khan, a student of Class III, whom quacks at his native Karyyannari village had refused to treat, forcing his parents to bring him to Calcutta.



Hibjul Ali Khan with his mother, Ahida, in Calcutta, on Thursday. Picture by Aminda Shankar Ray

"Everyone said that they came to see how I was but they actually wanted to hear the whistle blowing. None of them came back after I returned after the surgery," he added.

Hibjul's condition lasted for five days — from February 17 to February 21, when his father, Khelafat Ali, a tailor, and mother, Ahida, brought him to Calcutta. Hibjul had bought a

snack, with which the whistle comes free, and was playing with it when he accidentally swallowed it.

Doctors at the Medica ENT Institute, to where they were referred from a nursing home in Ekbalpore, realised the gravity of the matter on February 21 itself after a CT scan revealed that the 1cm-long black plastic whistle had got lodged in a division of the boy's left main bronchus.

"We opted for surgery straightaway, because there would soon be a swelling in the area. If the infection spread to the right lung as well, it would have been difficult to save him," said ENT specialist Arjun Dasgupta, who conducted the surgery with colleagues Chirrajit Dutta and N.V.K. Mohan. They also took the help of paediatric surgeons during the 90-minute procedure.

"We performed a complicated bronchoscopy to remove the foreign body. Such objects

generally go into the right lung, from where removal is easier. We also had to be careful because the whistle was made of various components and things would have got more complicated if it disintegrated," said Dasgupta.

According to hospital records, Rs 42,000 was waived from the Rs 57,000 "final bill" as Khelafat Ali had not been able to garner more than Rs 15,000 for his youngest son's operation.

"We had lost our sleep worrying what would happen to my youngest son and I don't know how to thank the doctors for making him all right," said the mother with the son on her lap on Thursday.

"I don't have to worry however about Hibjul swallowing another whistle. No one was buying the snack with which those small whistles come free, so the shopkeepers have stopped selling them altogether," said Ahida with a smile of relief.