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## Toddler survives after ingesting button battery

Family thankful to blood donors for saving daughter's life.

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August 20, 2020



They say that a split second can change your life forever. That was certainly the case for one Red Deer family earlier this year. It was mid-afternoon on April 9, and Leslie Bangamba was loading her dishwasher, when her 18-month-old daughter Amélie suddenly collapsed. At first, Leslie thought she was just being funny, copying her five and nine-year-old brothers at play.

“I said, ‘Okay sweetie, this isn’t funny,’ and then she made a horrible sound, so I immediately stopped what I was doing and picked her up. She felt so stiff, her eyes were rolling to the back of her head. At first, I thought maybe she hit her back on the corner of the dishwasher, so I gently laid her back down.”

As blood began to pour out of her daughter’s nose, Leslie called 911 and Amélie was rushed to the Red Deer Regional Hospital.

While there, Amélie vomited a large amount of blood leading doctors to suspect that she was bleeding internally. Upon admission, an X-ray revealed a foreign object had been ingested and was wreaking havoc on her tiny body. Based on the extent of her injuries, the decision was made to transport Amélie by ground ambulance to Stollery Children’s Hospital in Edmonton for further assessment and treatment.

“I didn’t even recognize my little girl as they wheeled her out of the hospital,” recalls Leslie, “she was so pale and wrapped up, I didn’t know if she was going to make it through the trip.”

### COVID impact

Leslie was left to deal with much of this ordeal on her own. Due to safety precautions in response to the pandemic, Amélie’s father was not able to join her mother at the hospital.

Leslie learned that Amélie had been admitted to Pediatric ICU. The charge nurse advised Leslie that her daughter had arrived, and they would come to get her once she had settled in.

"I had my husband on the phone with me, I was updating him on the situation and planning to video call with him once Amélie had settled. Right then, the charge nurse ran out advising me to follow her as Amélie had just gone into cardiac arrest. I broke down crying to my husband, Astrel, our daughter's dead, they can't bring her back!"

After an emotional day on her own, Leslie's husband joined her in a makeshift family room as the medical team worked to save their daughter.

"Late that evening they finally told us that they were taking her into the operating room for a very long procedure."

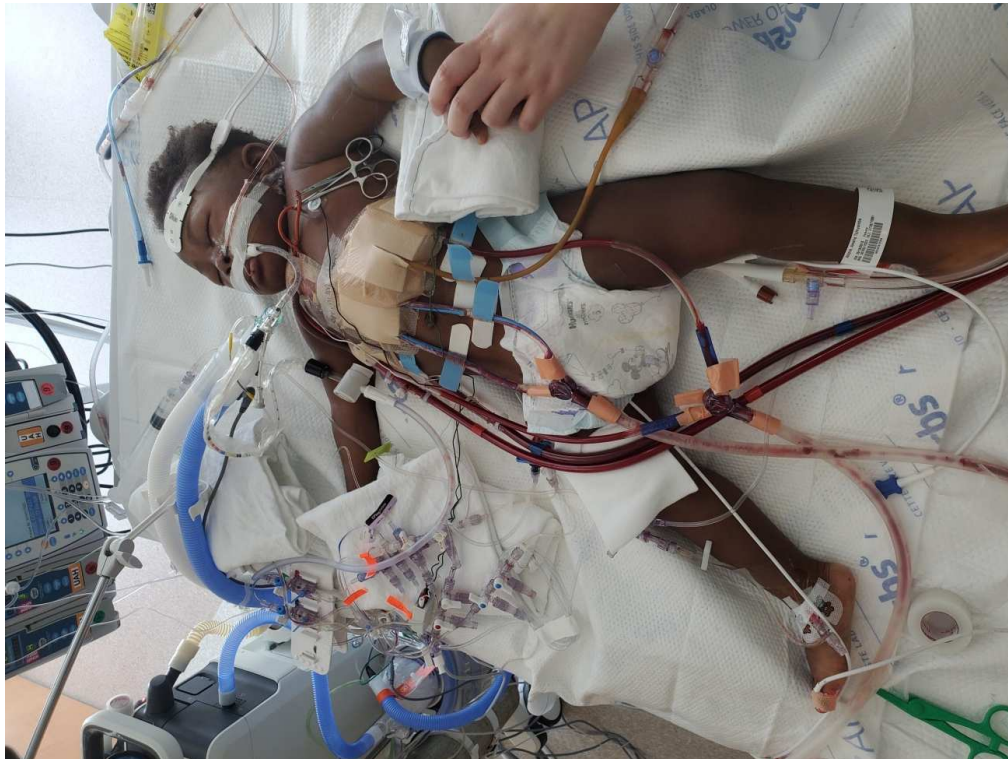
An extensive cardiac surgery determined that Amélie had swallowed a button battery.

Amélie was placed on a bypass machine as she had lost a lot of blood.

"In the operating room alone, Amélie received 4.2 litres of blood - without blood donors, our little girl wouldn't have survived!" said Leslie.

Through the night, surgeons updated the anxious parents on their progress. It was sunrise before the surgery was over.

### **The medical outcome**



*Amélie in hospital after ingesting a button battery*

Surgery revealed that the battery had combined with Amélie's saliva to create an electrical current, this caused a chemical reaction that burnt internal tissues. The battery ruptured her esophagus, trachea, aorta, carotid left artery, she suffered a stroke on the left side of her brain and had sub dermal bleeding on the right side.

<https://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/i-m-just-thankful-doctors-at-stollery-children-s-hospital-save-toddler-who-swallowed-a-battery-1.4934676?cache=fcpbhnglqs%3FclipId%3D104066>

Based on the damage, doctors estimate that the battery had been inside this little body for a couple of days. Research shows that a button battery, once ingested, can be fatal within hours. Amélie's survival is truly a miracle.

### **Recovery**





*Amélie Adolphe smiles for the camera after moving from Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) to the In-Patient Unit. Her first smile since being hospitalized.*

Amélie was in the ICU for 11 days and received a plethora of transfusions, draining old blood from surgery and replacing lost platelets.

“I became comfortable with the smell and look of blood because I knew that it was saving my little girl’s life,” said Leslie.

Amélie was an in-patient for about a month and intensive physiotherapy and occupational therapy and multiple CT Scans to ensure the bleeding in her brain had subsided. She was discharged May 15, a mere six weeks after the incident.

“Her recovery has been amazing; my family affectionately jokes that she heals like Wolverine. Unless you see her scars, you wouldn’t believe this happened. The only thing that is different is that she has gastrointestinal tube, to help make sure she gets enough nutrition as she still struggles to eat orally.”

Amélie is now home, happy and dancing. She is no longer receiving blood products and embraces her G tube as her new bestie.

As Amélie returns to her spunky, bubbly, curious self, her family is optimistic for the future but for now, they take it day-by-day.





*The Adolphe-Bangamba family reunited and optimistic about the future  
Photo credit Madison Jamie Photography*

Leslie has taken the year off to care for Amélie. Family friends have started a [go fund me page](#) to assist with expenses and lost income.

#### **Importance of blood donation.**

Amélie's mother and father are originally from Montreal and Haiti respectively. They had divided their time between Alberta and Ontario until Astrel's career as an aircraft structures technician led them to Red Deer more than 12 years ago.

Despite a fear of needles, Leslie first donated in honour of her brother who had Sickle Cell Anemia. Astrel was quick to join her.

The couple have been donating since 2013, never imagining that the need for blood would touch their lives.

Now each donation is made in gratitude for the help their daughter received.

Astrel Adolphe's donation at the Red Deer donor centre in June was particularly emotional.

"My husband is not a social media guy "shared Leslie, "but I told him 'you need to take a picture, you need to make this and every donation in honour of our daughter. We are sharing her story publicly, because if it wasn't for Canadian Blood Services our daughter would be dead."

For anyone contemplating donating blood Leslie says, "Just do it! You can book your appointment on an app and the donation doesn't take more than 30 minutes of your time. You'll feel good knowing that you are giving back and you're helping save lives!"

[The amazing journey of donated blood](#)

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