

Button Battery Ingestion

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The latest issue of [MMWR](#) has an article about the rising incidence of ingestion of button batteries and the damage they can do. This report is timely since we just had a phone call to the office for such an incident this week. [Button batteries](#) are the disc/coin shaped batteries that used to be associated with hearing aids. Now, due to newer batteries' increased capacity and voltage, they can be found in lots of electronic devices throughout the home including some toys. The danger with the ingestion of these batteries is when they become stuck in the esophagus and don't make it into the stomach. If they make it to the stomach, the risk of complications is low and close stool observation for evidence of passage of the battery is usually the only attention required. Batteries which become lodged in the esophagus can cause serious tissue damage in a very short amount of time. This tissue damage can cause an erosion through the esophagus wall and into vital structures nearby. Tragically, 17 children have died from complications of ingested batteries since 1995 and the number of ER visits due to ingestion has been climbing.

So what do you do if you suspect your child has swallowed a battery? Regardless of the time or situation, **this may be a true emergency**. If **after office hours**, a trip **to the ER** is warranted. **During office hours**, please **call the office immediately**. We will direct you to either come into the office or arrange for an x-ray to determine where the battery is located. If the battery is located in the esophagus and not the stomach, immediate removal is recommended and will require the expertise of a gastroenterologist and/or surgeon. As stated in the first paragraph, the damage done can occur in a very short amount of time so please do not delay in seeking help for your child.

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