

Lithium Batteries Pose Hazard to Young Children

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Most new parents are savvy when it comes to protecting their [small children](#) from harm within the household. Cabinet locks can be found where chemicals are kept, baby gates prevent toddlers from walking into the home office, where the computer poses a threat in a number of ways.

However, it's likely that most [new parents](#) haven't actually thought about the risk of a product that is found throughout their homes: the button sized lithium battery. Found in everything from television remotes to singing greeting cards, they are quickly becoming a health and safety hazard for young children.

The size of a nickel, the problem with the battery has very little to do with choking. They are easily swallowed by toddlers; they then lodge in the esophagus. Often the child doesn't realize he hasn't consumed something edible. However, if the battery is not expelled within 2 hours, the child is at risk for [health](#) complications and death from alkaline burn.

The cause of the hazard is not battery leakage, as it is in a number of other battery poisoning incidents. The danger lies in the outside current of the battery, resulting in hydroxide than can easily burn through tissue.

A study led by Dr. Toby Litovitz, director of the National Capital Poison Center in conjunction with George Washington School of Medicine, the University of Virginia School of Medicine and the Georgetown University School of Medicine took a look at what is becoming an increasingly common problem.

According to the team, 14 deaths from swallowing [lithium batteries](#) have occurred since the 1970s; six of those fatalities were in the last 6 years. This is because in 1990, only 1% of consumer batteries were lithium, while 18%-20% of all batteries are currently of this type.

In response to the study, Dr. Lovitz suggests that manufacturers who produce products that run on lithium

batteries make it more difficult to access the battery. Of the 8,600 cases of battery swallowing they studied, fully 62% were the result of the child taking the battery directly from the product. Thirty percent of the children found the batteries loose, while another 8% got the battery from the packaging.

Other Household Hazards

Dr. Lovitz and his team emphasize that parental awareness can go a long way in preventing a tragedy with a lithium battery. He urges parents to become aware of exactly how many lithium batteries are in the home, and where they are located.

In addition to becoming more attuned to batteries, WebMd provides [parents](#) with a list of reminders concerning child safety in the home, such as:

Make sure all outlets are covered with protectors

When cooking, use the back burners and make sure pot handles are turned away from the front of the stove

Unplug hair dryers to prevent electrocution

Other safety precautions can be found at www.webmd.com/parenting/childproof-home.

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