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Malaga toddler recovering after swallowing battery

Dee Riggs

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Fourteen-month-old Kyleen Carrillo of Malaga has been treated at Children's Hospital and Medical Center in Seattle.

This story previously listed the wrong name of the clinic where Kyleen was first treated. The error has been corrected in this version.

SEATTLE — When her 14-month-old son fell asleep in the car on the way to the doctor, Shawna Carrillo thought briefly that she might be over-reacting. Maybe, she thought, whatever was stuck in her son's throat would just come out naturally in a few days, and she should just turn the car around and head back home.

She didn't, and that may have saved the toddler's life.

"There was just some urge telling me to go, so I just kept on going," the Malaga woman said.

A doctor at Central Washington Hospital would later remove a flat, round battery from the boy's throat, but not before it had burned a small hole about a third of the way down his esophagus. Later that day, May 19, Kylan was airlifted to Children's Hospital and Medical Center in Seattle, where he is still being treated today.

"These situations have been fatal," Carrillo said. "The battery burns through the esophagus and trachea and causes hemorrhaging."

A study published May 24 in the journal *Pediatrics* says lithium cell batteries — especially those that are often referred to as button batteries — are dangerous to small children if swallowed.

Thirteen children died between 1985 and 2009 and 73 had "major outcomes" that caused an acute health crisis or ongoing health problems for the child, the journal article stated. Among the problems was vocal cord paralysis.

The batteries are not only a choking hazard, but, when they come in contact with fluid in the esophagus, the batteries undergo a chemical reaction that releases hydroxide. This substance burns the esophageal tissue.

Kylan Carrillo was lucky. He is expected to make a full recovery, his mother said.

On May 19, Carrillo said, her son apparently got into a drawer in the living room, which contained the battery, while she was vacuuming in another room.

"He had pulled down that drawer and had stuff scattered about," she said. "I pulled a dime out of his mouth, and noticed that he was still swallowing a lot, like when you have something stuck in your throat."

She said she drove first to Columbia Valley Community Health, where an X-ray showed a small object in the boy's throat that appeared to be another coin. Kylen was then referred to Central Washington Hospital, where a nose and throat doctor put him under general anesthesia, removed the battery and discovered the esophageal damage. Carrillo estimated the battery was lodged in her son's throat for five hours.

On Thursday, she said she was hoping Kylen can come home next week to join his father, Patrick, and two brothers, Ayden, 5; and Taran, 3. For the next two months, he will be fed through a tube that goes directly into his stomach. That, she said, should allow time for the hole in his esophagus to heal. He also has a drain tube in his neck to minimize the amount of saliva going into his chest cavity.

Her message to people who use small batteries: "These batteries are just so dangerous. Parents need to make sure they are up where kids cannot reach them."

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