

emergency medical treatment. ">



CPSC issues new warning on button batteries

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Yesterday, the Consumer Products Safety Commission www.CPSC.gov issued an [updated warning](#) on small coin- and button-sized batteries. These small batteries are particularly dangerous if swallowed and require immediate emergency medical treatment.

Last week, I presented information to the CPSC on button cell batteries with Toby Litovitz, M.D., and other prominent physicians who are advocating for battery safety. Dr. Litovitz, of the National Capital Poison Center, collects and analyzes incident data through its National Battery Ingestion Hotline. Her analysis revealed that button-battery related incidents resulting in severe injury and fatality have increased sevenfold since 1985. The most fatal incidents were reported in children under four who accessed the batteries directly from products such as remote controls, games, toys, and calculators. Seniors, who might swallow a hearing aid battery mistakenly thinking it was pill, were also cited as those most often injured.

Coin-sized batteries are easily misdiagnosed following x-ray since it's hard for physicians to distinguish them from a coin. A small battery can eat its way through the esophagus and cause life-threatening or permanent disabling injuries if it's not removed within two hours. (See our [laboratory demonstration](#) of the internal damage it can cause.)

That's why it is critical to get immediate emergency treatment when ingestion of a battery is suspected.

At our meeting with the CPSC we advocated for manufactures to ensure that the button-cell batteries in their products are held in by durable, child-resistant battery covers fastened with a screw. Toys with batteries are already required to have child-resistant battery closures; we think this practice should be expanded to all products.

The CPSC recommends the following step to prevent battery-ingestion injuries:

- Discard button batteries carefully.
- Do not allow children to play with button batteries, and keep button batteries out of your child's reach.
- Caution hearing aid users to keep hearing aids and batteries out of the reach of children.
- Never put button batteries in your mouth for any reason as they are easily swallowed accidentally.
- Always check medications before ingesting them. Adults have swallowed button batteries mistaken for pills or tablets.
- Keep remotes and other electronics out of your child's reach if the battery compartments do not have a screw to secure them. Use tape to help secure the battery compartment.
- If a button battery is ingested, immediately seek medical attention. The National Battery Ingestion Hotline is available anytime at (202) 625-3333 (call collect if necessary), or call your poison center at (800) 222-1222.

—Don Mays

