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# MailOnline

## Hi-tech lithium batteries hidden in remote controls can burn holes in children's throats - and cases have quadrupled in a decade

- Injuries caused by lithium-ion batteries have quadrupled in a decade
- 66% of parents have never heard of dangers
- Most common injuries come from swallowing batteries from remote controls
- Symptoms start off similar to common cold
- Can cause severe injuries or even death

By [Rob Waugh](#)

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An increasing number of children are being hospitalised after eating lithium-ion batteries - tiny, coin-sized batteries which can stick in the oesophagus and are highly toxic.

'It was frustrating because we couldn't figure what was wrong with him,' said Sonia Khan, whose child Umar had to be fed through a tube for three months after eating one of the batteries.

In some cases, eating lithium batteries can be fatal - and cases have quadrupled in the past decade.



© Sonia Khan/ABC News

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Initially, symptoms seem more like a cold, but the poisons inside the batteries can burn a hole inside children's oesophaguses, leading to severe illness or death

In a recent study by Energizer and Safe Kids USA, 66% of parents indicated they have not read, seen or heard anything about the risks of coin-sized button batteries.

'It was tough on him,' Khan said in an interview with [ABC news](#). 'He didn't understand why he couldn't eat. We all had to hide from food from him.'

The tiny batteries - often found in hi-tech remote controls, toys and greetings cards - are dangerous because they are less well shielded than batteries such as AA or AAA batteries.

They are also more easily swallowed.

'The threat is invisible, as these batteries are often inside compartments within electronic devices,' says a spokesperson for Battery Controlled, a charity which deals with the dangers of lithium batteries.

'However, because many of these devices are not children's toys, the battery compartments are easy to open. Small children often have easy access to these devices and enjoy playing with them, and many parents do not know there is a risk.'



© ABC News

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The number of cases where children have been seriously hurt or have died has more than quadrupled in the past five years (2006-2010) compared to the five years prior (2001-2005).

In 2010 alone, there were more than 3,400 swallowing cases reported in the U.S., according to Dr. Toby Litovitz, of the National Capital Poison Centre who is an advisor to this effort.

Most often, the batteries children swallow have come out of remote control devices. Often, the first symptoms are indistinguishable from a

common cold.

Emmett Rauch, two, swallowed a lithium battery from a remote control and has since had 18 surgeries in the past year at Phoenix Children's Hospital in Arizona.

His mother Karla Rauch said no one saw Emmett swallow the battery and the first symptoms he had were similar to a cold.



**Little fighter: Emmett Rauch, two, has endured 18 surgeries in under a year after he swallowed a lithium battery at his home in Phoenix, Arizona**

She said: 'Batteries start burning in the oesophagus within two hours and it was in him we think about three days.'

The toddler has had four inches of his oesophagus removed after the acid from the battery burned two holes through it.

He has also suffered multiple cases of collapsed lung and had close to 200 X-rays. He has spent more than 19 weeks of his young life in the pediatric ICU.



**Household danger: A lithium battery was lodged in Emmett Rauch's throat for three days**

The batteries are so dangerous because they don't have as much casing as an AA battery.

A nurse who cares for Emmett, Michelle Chacon, said she has seen several cases of children swallowing batteries and that more should be done to make families aware of the household danger.

The nurse has helped the Rauch family set up a charity to raise awareness about the tiny batteries which are used in everyday objects like clocks, cameras and calculators.

Ms Chacon said: 'You talk about childproofing your home and covering your outlets, and this needs to be a part of that.'

According to the National Capital Poison Center, each year in the U.S. more than 3,500 people swallow miniature disc or button batteries.

The charity called Emmett's Fight aims to inform about the dangers of button battery ingestion.

The symptoms are similar to the common cold or the flu - fever, lack of appetite, coughing and increase of mucus production.



**Survival: Emmett Rauch was close to death after ingesting a battery at his home and has suffered multiple health problems ever since**



**Hooked up: Emmett Rauch swallowed the lithium battery from a TV remote control at his home in Arizona**



Constant worry: The boy's mother Karla Rauch said at first his symptoms appeared like a common cold

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OK, parents... please teach your kids not to put small objects into their mouths. Please also take personal care not to leave such objects lying around. The last thing we need is a crusade against lithium iron batteries. The ignorant parents' crusade against internet freedom is bad enough to deal with.

- Ken, Kent, 14/5/2012 17:31

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Broken glass does the same and that's why we keep it away from kids. Dumb article.

- JonW, Melbourne, 14/5/2012 17:25

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Haha. And psychiatrists prescribe this stuff and the FDA wants to add it to our drinking water.

- Dude, Austin USA, 14/5/2012 17:13

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I was taught in the forties not to put things in my mouth - I quick learned even though I cried because my hand hurt.

- Pete, Lincs, 14/5/2012 14:09

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