

Battery-Related ER Visits High In Young Children



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Coin-sized button batteries can be found in many household items from remote controls to watches and electronics, but a new report finds the number of emergency room visits for button battery ingestions has doubled over the past 20 years- and kids 5 and under are seen the most.

Researchers say there were 66,000 battery-related emergency room visits by children under age 18 in the United States between 1990 and 2009.

Button batteries accounted for 84 percent of all battery-related ingestions, especially among children aged 5 years and younger.

If swallowed, batteries are not only a choking hazard for children, but can severely burn a child's throat or kill a child in as little as two hours.

Researchers recommend increasing prevention efforts, especially for younger children. Experts say parents need to be vigilant.

"Button batteries aren't just in toys. They're in hearing aids, they're in your car key opener, and other little gadgets around the house that you may entertain your kids with while you're answering the phones," said Cleveland Clinic Pediatrician Dr. Ellen Rome. "Don't let them play with anything other than kid-approved items because anything that goes in a toddler's or a baby's hands can go into the toddler's or baby's mouth."

Dr. Rome says button batteries can actually burn holes in the esophagus or intestines, thus being life-threatening.

Complete findings for the battery study are in the journal "Pediatrics."

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