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By [Carly Thurman](#)

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[Button batteries: a hidden hazard in your home](#)



Over the past two decades there has been a dramatic increase in the number of children’s emergency room visits due to battery-related injuries. A [recent study](#) tracked battery-related ER visits in 100 hospitals across the U.S. and found that over a period of 20 years, the number of these visits had almost doubled. They also found that 84% of these visits were related to button batteries.

The numbers have almost doubled! Why is this?

Compared to 20 years ago, many homes have more technology and battery-operated devices, increasing the odds for children

to accidentally harm themselves. These household devices have hidden risks for young children, risks that are often not communicated during baby-proofing home visits or taught in parenting classes.

Button batteries are coin-shaped batteries that can be found in everyday household items such as:

- Remote controls
- Electronic greeting cards
- Audio books
- Bathroom scales



- Flameless candles
- Children's toys

The dangers of button batteries

Infants and toddlers are known to pick up small objects and put them in their mouths, nose, ears- you name it. These small and shiny button batteries can easily catch the eye of small children and can be inserted by a child into their ears or nose, or more [dangerously](#), swallowed.

If a battery is swallowed, your child is at risk for choking, but there's something else you should know. **Even if they are breathing normally, swallowed batteries are very dangerous!**

Often, a swallowed battery is able to pass through the digestive system and will eventually come out in the child's stool. But, the battery also can become lodged in the esophagus. Saliva can trigger an electrical current in the battery, producing a chemical reaction in the esophagus. This can result in severe burns to the child's esophagus and digestive tract, and, if left untreated could be fatal.

Because these batteries are so small and often go unnoticed, it is important to look for any signs or symptoms that your child has swallowed a battery. Symptoms can include:

- Coughing
- Drooling
- Nausea or vomiting
- Discomfort

If you think your child has swallowed a battery, go to the emergency room IMMEDIATELY. Inform hospital staff that your child has swallowed a battery and give them the identification number on the battery's packaging, if possible. Do not let your child eat or drink until a chest x-ray is complete to determine if there is a battery present. It is also important not to induce vomiting at any point.

Watch this clip featured on the TODAY show for more information on the dangers of button batteries:

How to prevent battery-related accidents

Children under the age of 4 are at the most risk for ingesting batteries. Several [precautionary](#) steps can be taken to help keep your child safe from battery-related accidents:

- Search your home for any item or device that may contain button batteries
- Place these devices out of sight and out of reach of young children
- Make sure all compartments that contain batteries are securely screwed in, or taped shut
- Keep all loose or spare batteries locked away in a storage compartment
- If throwing away a dead battery, place it in a container and at the bottom of the trash where kids are unlikely to search.

Remember, kids are curious and hardly know the difference between a small battery and a small toy. The best way to prevent a trip to the ER is to prevent battery-related accidents before they happen. Practice the safety guidelines listed above in your home and share them with friends and family.

Share with us! What are ways you keep your kids safe at home? What are other precautions you take as a parent?

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