

Larry Jones: Swallowed button batteries can cause serious damage

By Larry Jones

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Independence, MO — Have you noticed small, coin-sized batteries in products, like your flashlight, remote control, and in some toys around your house? These are called button batteries, and swallowing these batteries can lead to serious health concern.

The problem is serious enough that the Consumer Product Safety Commission has reached out to the electronics industry and battery manufacturers, urging them to develop warnings and industry standards.

One of the groups most affected by this problem is young children. They can swallow the batteries after gaining access to them in games, toys, calculators, remote controls and other items left within their reach.

Swallowing button batteries can cause serious and life threatening health issues. According to Safe Kids USA, when a button battery is swallowed, in as little as two hours the battery can start burning a hole in the throat.

Even once the battery is removed, damage can continue. To help protect children, the National Capital Poison Center provides the following recommendations. Never leave batteries sitting out. Make sure to store spare batteries, and batteries for recycling, out of sight and reach of young children. If recycling is not possible, wrap used batteries securely and discard them where a child can't find them.

Make sure to check all household devices to be certain the battery compartment is securely shut. Use strong tape to secure compartments that children can open or that might pop open if the device is dropped. Don't insert or change batteries in front of small children so they do not see how to open the battery compartment. Only purchase products that require a screwdriver or tool to open the battery compartment, or that are closed with a child-resistant locking mechanism.

Make sure all hearing aids for children have child-resistant battery compartments and make sure the lock is activated when the child is wearing the aid. Alert family members who wear hearing aids to the importance of keeping the batteries out of reach of small children at all times. That can be quite a burden since most hearing aid users remove the batteries from the aids each time they take the aids off.

If a battery has been swallowed, take the person or child to the emergency room immediately. Let the doctor or nurse know that you believe they may have swallowed a button battery. Quick action is crucial. Batteries can cause burns and life-threatening complications in as little as two hours. You should also wait to eat or drink until an X-ray determines where the battery is within your body. Call the National Battery Ingestion Hotline at 202-625-3333 for more information.

Information provided by [cpsc.gov](#), [poison.org](#), and [safekids.org](#)

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