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Monday, July 30, 2012 | 9:00 a.m.

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Updated: 6:55 p.m. Tuesday, July 3, 2012 | Posted: 1:58 p.m. Tuesday, July 3, 2012

Study shows number of children swallowing batteries continues rising

PITTSBURGH — Never mind coins. A recent study showed the number of children swallowing batteries is on the rise.

Susan and Mark Saduskas thought they'd done everything right when they baby-proofed their home.

"We put the outlet covers on. The knobs on our stove were covered. We had baby gates all over our house. We had put everything up that we thought we needed to put up," said Susan Saduskas.

But when their son Max was just 15 months old, he stumbled on a remote control and managed to remove and swallow the battery.

They rushed him to the hospital where doctors found a button battery lodged inside his esophagus.

"The image burned into my brain forever," said Mark Saduskas. "We just started crying. We looked at each other and started crying like, 'This isn't happening.'"

Doctors said it actually happens a lot. The button batteries are everywhere in homes, from toys to watches to the remote in your car.

According to a new study, a child was taken to the ER every 90 minutes in 2009 because of battery injuries. That's twice as many visits as 20 years ago.

"These can be very, very serious injuries," said Dr. Barbara Gaines, director of trauma and injury at Children's Hospital Pittsburgh.

Gaines said the tiny button batteries can cause chemical burns and lead to big problems in children.

"It essentially burns a hole in the esophagus, sometimes the esophagus, the trachea, the windpipe, and in some cases all the way into the aorta," she said.

Max had surgery to save his voice and his life. His parents said they are now keeping an even closer watch on their little boy.

Gaines said doctors already treated two patients in the past year at Children's Hospital who had burns in their esophagus from battery burns. Both are doing better, but only after several surgeries.

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