

Button Batteries Can Be a Huge Health Hazard For Small Children

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Article at a Glance

- Swallowing a button battery can cause severe injury and potentially even death in less than two hours.
- If you believe your child has ingested a button battery, go directly to the emergency room.
- Search your home for any devices that use these batteries and place them where your children can't get to them. Keep any loose batteries locked away.

Nowadays button batteries are everywhere—toys, games, remote controls, car alarm clickers, scales, singing books and greeting cards, hearing aids, watches, calculators, flashlights, etc. Unfortunately they also pose a huge threat to children.

According to a recent study, the number of children who have gone to the ER for swallowing a battery or placing it in their mouth, ears or nose has almost doubled over a 20-year period. In 2010, children swallowed more than 3,400 button batteries.

These batteries are particularly dangerous if they get lodged in the esophagus. The moisture can spark an electrical current that can destroy cells and even burn a hole through the esophagus. This can lead to long-term scarring. Multiple surgeries are often required to repair the damage. In some worst-case scenarios, children have bled to death when the battery burned through the aorta.

As these batteries become more powerful, the rate at which they can cause damage has increased. It can take less than two hours for serious damage to occur and often there are no warning signs. Because the batteries are so small, children can still breathe even with the battery stuck in their throat.

The best way to protect your children is by making sure these batteries are out of reach. Search your home for any devices that use these batteries and place them where your children can't get to them. Keep any loose batteries locked away.

If you believe that your child has swallowed or ingested a battery:

- Go to the emergency room immediately and let them know that your child has ingested a battery. If you can, provide the identification number on the battery's package.
- Do not allow your child to eat or drink anything or use nose or ear drops until examined by a doctor. The moisture can make it worse.
- You can call the 24-hour National Battery Ingestion Hotline at 202-625-3333 or call your poison center at 1-800-222-1222 for additional treatment information.