

Tauranga baby fights for life after battery accident

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A Tauranga baby may never make a sound or breathe on his own again after he swallowed a button battery, severely burning the inside of his throat.

Eight-month-old Devon Hacche swallowed the lithium-ion button battery on December 15, and has since undergone five surgeries, including a Christmas Eve operation where his chest was opened up and his heart and lungs stopped while surgeons attempted to cut out and repair burn tissue from his trachea and oesophagus.

Devon is currently in pediatric intensive care at Starship Hospital in Auckland, where he faces at least eight months in hospital followed by at least three more years of treatment.

His mother, Amanda Hacche, wrote an account of the accident on Facebook, describing it as every parent's worst nightmare.

She had been out of town on a work trip when it happened. Devon had been playing with his sister and a cousin when he suddenly became "extremely distressed and inconsolable". However, he soon settled, and his carers put it down to the infant being over-tired.

When Hacche returned, the only signs there was something wrong had been a runny nose, some coughing and wheezing. Hacche took Devon to see a doctor at Accident and Emergency, who suspected bronchitis and sent them home with an inhaler, spacer and paracetamol.

But Devon's breathing deteriorated through the night.

"By morning Devi was wheezing worse than ever and he was struggling and working hard for every breath," Hacche said.

She decided to take him straight to hospital, where Devon was given an x-ray and the battery lodged in his oesophagus was revealed.

"It turns out this is one of the most damaging and dangerous things that my beautiful boy could have ever ingested as they react with the saliva/gastric fluids and cause an electro-chemical reaction which causes deep and extremely fast corrosion burns into soft human tissue," Hacche said.

"In Devi's case the button battery had lodged itself deep in the oesophagus (food tube) and has caused severe and significant burns in and through the oesophagus wall and then burnt into the trachea!!

"It does not get much worse than this."

Hacche, a self-employed human resources director, has been at Devon's bedside in Starship Hospital for the past six weeks.

A Givealittle page, "Help for battery baby Devon", has been set up to raise money to go towards medical costs and care for Devon's siblings, Mikayla, 5, and Brayden, 15.

As of this morning, \$7436 has been donated to the family.

According to The Battery Controlled, a group formed to raise awareness about the danger of button batteries to young children, battery-related child injury is a growing issue in New Zealand.

Between 2011 and 2013, the National Poisons Centre received 175 calls regarding children under 6 years swallowing or inserting batteries in their nose and ears.

From March 2009 to February 2012, 63 children were treated at Starship Hospital for battery-related injuries.