



Doctors believe Tiffany Anderson's son Cooper swallowed a button battery six days before he started developing life-threatening symptoms. Picture: David Martinelli

ILLNESS

Toddler's oesophagus looked like 'a mushed-up hamburger' after swallowing button battery

ROSE BRENNAN, The Courier-Mail
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ONLY when little Cooper Anderson started to smell of acid did his parents and doctors - realise something was wrong.

Before that, mum Tiffany thought he was just struggling to get over the flu.

It's a common dilemma for parents, with more children being rushed to emergency departments after swallowing deadly batteries, but showing next to no symptoms.

In Cooper's case, the button battery from a pair of glasses for the family's 3D TV had become lodged in his oesophagus and his organs were being burnt from the inside out.

Doctors believe he swallowed the battery six days before he started developing life-threatening symptoms.

On April 1, Ms Anderson took her 18-month-old son to the GP after having a "rattling chest" for several days.

The doctor sent them to Toowoomba Base Hospital where Cooper's condition rapidly deteriorated, and his body started to excrete the acid from the battery.

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A chest X-ray revealed the horrifying cause of his illness.

"It didn't even cross our minds there were batteries in those glasses because we'd never used them, they came with the TV," Ms Anderson said. "There was no warning sign."

Doctors removed the battery but it had already burned holes through Cooper's oesophagus.

“Doctors told me the stomach acid eats the battery and then the battery acid eats you,” Mrs Anderson said.

The acid spread to his lungs and he was flown to the Lady Cilento Children’s Hospital.

“His oesophagus looked like a mushed-up hamburger, that’s how the doctors explained it to me,” Mrs Anderson said.

In Brisbane, Cooper could no longer breathe unassisted and was under sedation for four days. The scar tissue was so severe it sealed his throat shut and he couldn’t eat for 30 days.

Now home, Cooper has surgery to stretch his oesophagus scar tissue every four weeks.

“I need to get the word out about how dangerous these button batteries are – it can happen to anyone,” Mrs Anderson said.

In 2013 Sunshine Coast toddler Summer Steer died after she swallowed a button battery.

Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit director Ruth Baker said in 2013 four children a week were admitted to state emergency departments with button-battery illnesses.

“The industry needs to be more responsible for how they package and label and secure the batteries,” she said. “Families need to stop buying products with disk batteries and if they really do need it, they should only buy one with a secure battery compartment.”



An X-ray of Cooper Anderson’s chest revealed he had swallowed a battery.

Under current guidelines, only toys are required to meet mandatory battery protection standards.

Cooper is a part of the [Children’s Hospital Foundation’s telethon](#) to be held on October 17.

Originally published as [Toddler nearly eaten alive from inside](#)