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UK News

# TRAGIC TOT Our baby died after swallowing a battery from a toy – it burned a hole in his heart

Chris Taylor

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**A DEVASTATED couple told how their baby son died after swallowing a button battery.**



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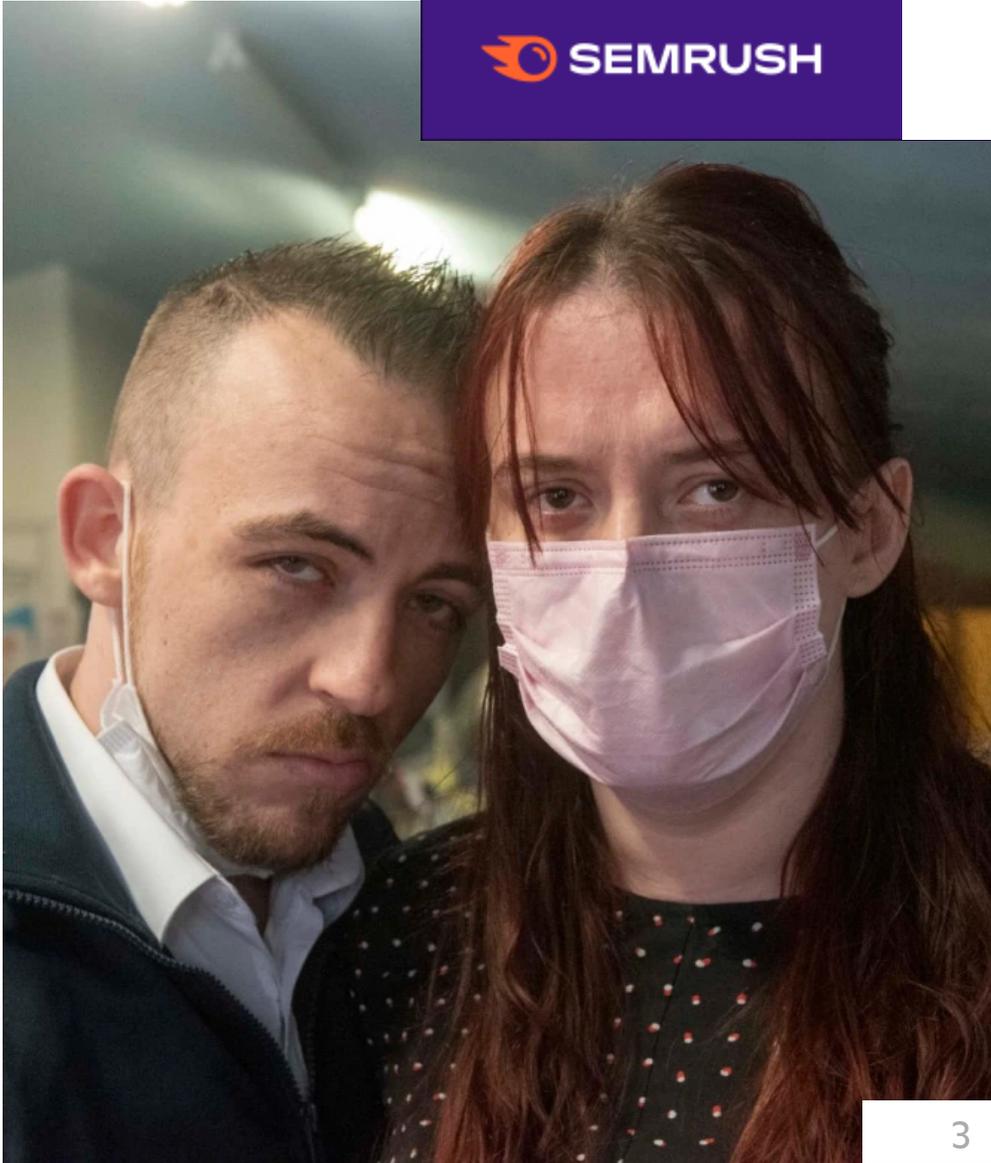
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He spent two days fighting for his life in hospital

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**Hughie's distraught parents** Credit: The Scottish Sun

Mum Christine McDonald, 32, and dad Hugh McMahon, 29 cradled him as he passed away.

Precious Hughie died after a battery he swallowed turned his blood “acidic” – and burned a five pence-

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The tragic tot “went floppy” after ingesting the small button power cell – believed to have fallen from a plush monkey toy – which then became lodged in his oesophagus.

His parents watched in anguish as their son spent two days fighting for his life in hospital.

But they made the heartbreaking decision to switch off his life support machine after medics admitted there was nothing more they could do.

After his death, Hugh found a battery was missing from his baby boy’s £16 VTech Swing & Sing monkey teddy, which contains a plastic mechanism to simulate a beating heart.

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The SEMRUSH logo, featuring a stylized orange and red flame icon to the left of the word "SEMRUSH" in white, all on a dark purple background.

It's believed Hughie put one of its three power cells in his mouth – leading to catastrophic organ damage.

The couple, who cradled their son and told him they loved him as he slipped away, are now campaigning to have the pill-sized batteries banned.

Traumatised Christine last night said: "It's a living hell. I felt my boy leaving. There's no words on this planet to describe so much pain.

"Nobody warned us about button batteries. I didn't even know what they were but they're in everything. I was more worried about bleach, falling down stairs and bumping heads."

The tormented mum and dad had enjoyed a December 24 movie and hot chocolate night with their kids shortly before their ordeal began.

They recalled how Hughie went limp as they tucked him into bed around 7.30pm and said they could hear a sinister rattling sound from his chest.

As he struggled to open his eyes, the parents – unaware he'd swallowed a battery – made a frantic 999 call for an ambulance from their Motherwell home. Hysterical Christine, who was screaming for help, then thrust her stricken lad into the arms of paramedics, who rushed him to nearby University Hospital Wishaw.

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**HEALTH DEAR DEIDRE** The family was told that the baby had died in a regular hospital room. She was ushered from the room by Personal trainer Hugh, who was on teams battling to save the baby. "All his blood was lying

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"It was everywhere. I couldn't understand how things could change from Christmas Eve to finding my son in a hospital room."

Doctors baffled by Hughie's devastating deterioration moved him to a specialist unit at Glasgow's Queen Elizabeth University Hospital – but warned he may not survive the 20-mile trip there.

Experts then discovered his blood had "turned acidic" and wouldn't clot.

The tot underwent a 12-hour op as surgeons tried to find out why.

Mum-of-four Christine said the wait for news was agonising.

She added: "It seemed like 12 years.

## TRAGIC TOT

"They told us it could leave him paralysed for life or cause a heart attack and he'd be left with severe brain damage.

"His liver and kidneys were damaged, his lungs had collapsed and his heart was inflamed."

The couple spent Christmas Day in the hospital while

relatives looked after their other son, Patrick, 14, and

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**HEALTH DEAR DEIDRE** T  
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“I pulled the surgeon aside and told him I was Hughie’s mum and needed to be told the truth.

“He told me if my boy made it through, he would be just existing. Nothing more.”

Christine and Hugh let Hughie go on Boxing Day after being told machines were all that was keeping him alive.

They spent their final hours with their cherished son washing the blood from his hair and body.

Family laid Hughie to rest at Eastfield Cemetery in Cumbernauld, Lanarkshire, last month.

Some 300 bikers formed a guard of honour and applauded as his tiny coffin was carried past.



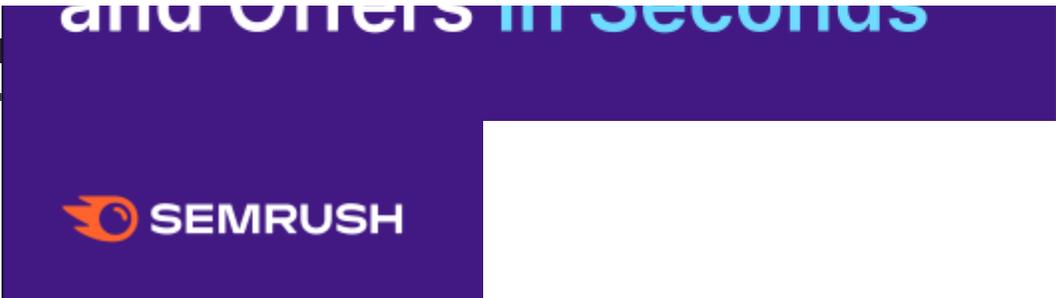
**"It's a living hell. I felt my boy leaving. There's no words on this planet to describe so much pain."**

Hugh said: “My uncle is a biker. They’re amazing people and turned up in droves to support us.

“It was incredible to see these big tough bearded guys on Harleys weeping as Hughie was carried out.

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**HEALTH DEAR DEIDRE** T

the toys given to him, r

toothbrushes, light-up ornaments.

“If anything lights up or makes a sound, there’s a good chance it contains a button battery.

“They’ve ruined our life and we want to make sure nobody else goes through what we have.”

Local SNP MSP Clare Adam wrote to the couple offering her sympathies.

She said: “As convener of the cross-party group on accident prevention and safety awareness, this is a subject we’ve returned to as recently as 2020.

“I will be doing everything I can to support the family and have tabled a question to parliament on this issue.”

VTech was asked to comment.

ITO sign the battery ban petition, visit [here](#).

