

CURRENT WEATHER

75° / SUNNY

» More weather

» CITY HALL CAM



Today is June 18, 2010

Search past 14 days (free)

Home | News | Local | Deaths | Opinion | Sports | Money | Living | Photos/Video | Marketplace | Real Estate | The Day In Pictures | Blogs | On the Common | Entertainment | Health & Fitness | Court Records | World & Regional News



SHARE [social media icons]

Larger text

Smaller text

Print this article

Email this article

Tuesday, June 1, 2010

Button battery deaths rise

Tots find compartments with more powerful cells

By Tara Parker-Pope THE NEW YORK TIMES

[Add a comment](#)

Last fall, 13-month-old Aidan Truett of Hamilton, Ohio, developed what seemed like an upper respiratory infection. He lost interest in food and vomited a few times, but doctors attributed it to a virus. After nine days of severe symptoms and more doctor visits, the hospital ordered an X-ray to look for pneumonia.

“ It’s like drain opener or lye. It’s something you want in the esophagus of your child. ”

-- DR. TOBY LITOVITZ, MEDICAL JOURNAL PEDIATRICS

What they found instead was totally unexpected. The child had ingested a “button” battery, one of those flat silver discs used to power remote controls, toys and other home electronics.

The battery was surgically removed the next day, and Aidan was sent home. But the damage had been done. The battery’s current had set off a chemical reaction in the child’s esophagus, burning through both the esophageal wall and attacking the aorta. Two days after the battery was removed, Aidan began coughing and soon died from his injuries.

Such deaths are extremely rare. There were fewer than 10 documented during the past six years. But ingestion of lithium cell batteries is a surprisingly common problem, documented last week in two reports in the medical journal *Pediatrics*.

About 3,500 cases of button cell battery ingestion are reported annually to poison control centers.

Data from the National Capital Poison Center in Washington found a sevenfold increase in severe complications from button cell ingestions in recent years, from less than a half percent (about a dozen cases per year) to about 3 percent (nearly 100 cases per year), based on a review of 56,000 cases since 1985.

“The injuries are so much more serious,” said Dr. Toby Litovitz, director and lead author of both articles in *Pediatrics*. “It’s like drain opener or lye. It’s not something you want in the esophagus of your child.”

The batteries that pose the greatest risk are those that begin with the number 20, which stands for 20 millimeters. They are newer and stronger than older models. Batteries numbered 2032, 2025 and 2016 are responsible for more than 90 percent of serious injuries.

Federal safety rules require toys that use the batteries to have battery compartments that are locked with screws. But devices intended for adults often hold the batteries in with a simple plastic cover.

In 60 percent of the cases involving children under age 6, the child has removed the battery from the electronic device. The problem is that most parents are not even aware when it happens, yet studies show that battery begins to cause severe damage within just two hours of ingestion.

Cara George of Littleton, Colo., has been working to raise awareness about lithium batteries ever since her 18-month-old daughter, Brenna, died after ingesting one nearly two years ago.

“I think there should be warnings on every item the batteries are in,” George said. “They are in greeting cards and children’s books that talk. They’re everywhere.”

[Add a comment](#)



Click here
to subscribe to the
Telegram & Gazette

Articles Most Commented On Today

1. Held without bail
2. Friends in court
3. "BP CEO telling Congress he's 'devastated' by spill
4. Trooper killed by passing vehicle
5. BP CEO tells Congress he's 'deeply sorry'
6. School bans hat to honor troops
7. Just-sold church may be razed
8. Man arrested in slayings of his family
9. Motorcyclist killed in van collision
10. Westboro woman arrested after allegedly biting officer

Most Read Stories

1. Trooper killed by passing vehicle
2. Woman allegedly bites officer, attacks daughter
3. Courthouse Records
4. Was game Wallace's last?
5. Westboro woman arrested after allegedly biting
6. Neighbors change stance on CSX
7. DA says man left notes saying he killed his fam
8. Held without bail
9. Friends in court
10. Motorcyclist killed in van collision

NEWS

[telegram.com](#) | [Local News](#) | [World & Regional News](#) | [Columnists](#) | [Health & Fitness](#) | [Deat](#)
| [Court records](#) | [Past headlines](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Weather](#) | [Maps](#) | [Mobile](#)

SPORTS

[Sports section](#) | [Area results](#) | [Sports columnists](#) | [Hometeam](#)

LIVING

[Living section](#) | [Movie reviews & showtimes](#) | [DVD releases](#) | [TV listings](#) | [Dining Guide](#) | [Te](#)
[Crossword](#) | [Parade](#) | [Games](#) | [Lottery](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Events calendar](#)

MONEY

[Money section](#) | [On the job](#) | [Business @ Noon](#)

OPINION

[Opinion section](#) | [Columnists](#) | [Letters to the Editor](#) | [Blogs](#)

NEWSLETTERS/FEEDS

[Reader Recap](#) | [Breaking News Alert](#) | [Keyword Search News](#) | [Headline News](#) | [Business @ 1](#)
[Alerts](#) | [The Weekend Starts NOW](#) | [T&G on Facebook](#) | [T&G on Twitter](#)

DELIVERY

[Place a new subscription](#) | [Renew a subscription](#) | [Vacation stops](#) | [Billing changes](#) | [Address](#)
[Telegram & Gazette Vacation Locations \(PDF\)](#) | [FAQ](#)

CELEBRATIONS

[Weddings](#) | [Engagements](#) | [Birthdays](#) | [Anniversaries](#) | [Other](#) | [Order forms](#)

PUBLICATIONS

[The Banner](#) | [TelegramTowns](#) | [Hometeam](#) | [The Item](#) | [Worcester Living](#)

WEBSITES

[Gone But Not Forgotten](#) | [MassMoms.com](#) | [OntheCommon.com](#) | [Pets](#) | [Worcester Living](#)

CLASSIFIEDS

[Legal Notices](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Marketplace](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Pets](#) | [Place An Ad](#)

© 2010 Worcester Telegram & Gazette Corp. | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Submissions Policy](#) | [Subscription Services](#) | [T&G Rewards](#)