

Docs Issue Call-to-Action to Parents, Legislators Regarding Button Batteries

 nbcchicago.com/news/local/button-battery-dangers/1860251/

Physicians at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago say the last three weeks have brought at least two cases of children severely injured after ingesting button batteries. In one case, the battery had perforated the esophagus and the child required hospitalization.

The cases prompted doctors on Thursday make a call-to-action to parents and legislators to help protect kids.

"What is disturbing about this particular thing is the amount of damage it can do, especially to children under four years of age," said Dr. Steve Krug, the head of the hospital's division of emergency medicine.

Button batteries, or coin cells, power everything from remotes to calculators to musical greeting cards. They are increasingly being used in portable electronic devices, and doctors say they can be especially dangerous to children who swallow them.

But they're not just a choking hazard. Physicians say the batteries cause much more damage than coins or other small items kids can ingest because they actually conduct current once inside the body.

"It causes a chemical burn that can go through the windpipe or the aorta and can have fatal consequences," said Dr. Karen Maule.

A 2010 study by the National Capitol Poison Center found that battery-related injuries have increased sevenfold since 1985. Most of the time, parents don't know their children have swallowed a button battery until it's too late.

Very often, doctors say, the symptoms of a battery ingestion appear mild at first and can be missed. A battery can start causing damage as soon as two hours after it is swallowed.

Children suspected of swallowing should be immediately taken to an emergency room for an X-Ray. Making the child vomit or allowing him to eat or drink is not recommended.

Parents should know where button batteries are in their homes and treat them like magnets and poisons, taking care to keep them and the devices that contain them out of the hands of young children.

They suggest that parents not insert or change batteries in front of small children. They also recommend that they not be stored near foods nor medicines. They are also trying to get

manufacturers to safeguard the battery compartments on their products by requiring that a screw removed before a battery door would open.