

Hidden dangers are found in button batteries

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News

Yaritza Medina's five-year-old daughter Savannah accidentally swallowed one while on vacation and got very sick.



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NEWPORT NEWS -- The federal government is warning parents about the dangers of button cell batteries.

Yaritza Medina's five-year-old daughter Savannah accidentally swallowed one that had been left on the kitchen counter during their family vacation.

'I asked my daughter that was sitting on the stairs if she had washed her hands and she wanted to reply to me in a playful way, so she tilted her head and and did like a gesture with her hand as well and at that particular moment is when she ingested the battery,' said Medina.

A few minutes later, Savannah got very sick.

'Right away, she started screaming and grabbing her throat and she vomited.'

The little girl was rushed to the emergency room at Bon Secours Mary Immaculate Hospital and then was transferred to Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters in Norfolk.

'As soon as we discovered Savannah had the battery, she went to the ER to the operating room,' said surgeon Dr. Cristina Baldassari.

'Sometimes there are no symptoms. Sometimes it's just that the parent saw the child swallow it. The best thing to do, even if there are no symptoms, is to take the child out to the emergency room,' she added.

The National Capital Poison Center estimates about 3,500 people swallow button cell batteries every year.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission issued a warning as well.

Small, coin-sized batteries can be found in products in nearly every home in America. From the flashlight sitting on the table, to the remote control next to the TV, 'button batteries' as they are commonly referred to, are in thousands of products used in and around the home. Young children and senior adults are unintentionally swallowing the button batteries and in some cases, the consequences are immediate and devastating, according to the press release.

Dr. Baldassari says there's a limited amount of time to react if you ingest a button battery.

'It's like a timebomb waiting, you know, when it gets lodged in their throats,' said Dr. Baldassari, stressing that significant damage can occur in just three hours.

At CHKD, Dr. Baldassari removed the button battery in Savannah's throat, but not before the lining of her esophagus had been burned. Fortunately, it did not erode the esophageal wall.

Savannah's scar tissue is being closely monitored so it doesn't cause choking or damage her voice.

The CPSC has tips to prevent unintentional battery ingestion:

Discard button batteries carefully.

Do not allow children to play with button batteries and keep button batteries out of your child's reach.

Caution hearing aid users to keep hearing aids and batteries out of the reach of children.

Never put button batteries in your mouth for any reason as they are easily swallowed accidentally.

Always check medications before ingesting them. Adults have swallowed button batteries mistaken for pills or tablets.

Keep remotes and other electronics out of your child's reach if the battery compartments do not have a screw to secure them. Use tape to help secure the battery compartment.

If a button battery is ingested, immediately seek medical attention.

The National Battery Ingestion Hotline is available anytime at (202) 625-3333 (call collect if necessary), or call your poison center at (800) 222-1222.