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News

## Choking hazards are a concern for holidays

November 22nd, 2011 | by Joan Garrett McClane



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## **making toys safe**

Consider a child's age when selecting toys.

Keep toys with small parts away from children under age 3.

Check for damage to toys and loose toy parts around the home.

Actively supervise children when playing with small balls, cords, strings or battery-powered items.

Be familiar with harmful products on [www.recalls.gov](http://www.recalls.gov).

Check the safety of second hand toys at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).

*Source: Erlanger*

During the holidays, when trinkets, toys and ornaments abound, a child's risk of choking increases significantly, and Erlanger officials say one of the biggest dangers this season could be button batteries.

The batteries, as small as a nickel, are used in flameless candles, thin remote controls, watches and electronic greeting cards. If swallowed, they can react with body fluids and burn through a young child's esophagus in two hours, causing permanent damage or death, said Cindy Jackson, a pediatric nurse and coordinator of the Safe and Sound Program at Erlanger.

"Saliva and stomach acid lead to electric currents," Jackson said.

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This year, the hospital has seen a handful of battery-related cases, and officials said most people don't know button batteries can be so harmful. Even though the battery is small, it won't pass through a child's system.

"Parents need to be advised on the types of batteries the item uses and that the battery compartment is securely screwed tight," Jackson said.

Nationally there were 3,400 battery-related injuries in 2010, according to the National Capital Poison Center. Such incidents have quadrupled in the past five years, Jackson said.

Parents may not always know their child has swallowed something as small as a button and should look for symptoms such as coughing, sore throat, difficulty swallowing or difficulty breathing, said Andrea Goins, a pediatrician at Children's Hospital.

Other items that get collected during the Christmas season also can be harmful. Mistletoe, holly berry and Jerusalem cherry are used to decorate but can be poisonous.

Any item smaller than the inside of a toilet paper roll, such as a peppermint candy or the hook on an ornament, also can be a choking hazard, Goins said.

"Don't put small ornaments low on the tree," she said.

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