

Child dangers tied to button batteries

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When Susan Sadauskas turned her back for a few moments on her 15-month-old son, Max, the Ohio mom never imagined the toddler would make his way to the remote control for her stereo, remove its coin-shaped battery and swallow it.

Max began to throw up at the dinner table and his parents took him to the emergency room.

There staff detected the nickel-sized battery stuck in the boy's esophagus and rushed him to emergency surgery.

Last year, more than 20 children suffered major injuries or died after ingesting button batteries, leading to public awareness campaigns this holiday season.

The batteries are often used to power small electronic devices, from remote controls and watches to musical cards and ornaments.

Last week, doctors and safety experts joined Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan to discuss the issue at her annual news conference on the state's Safe Shopping Guide, which compiles information about product recalls.

"The battery gets stuck in the esophagus and it starts to discharge its energy and it doesn't take a lot to cause a serious burn," said Dr. Steve Krug, who heads the emergency department at Children's Memorial Hospital. "It doesn't seem like a lot of energy, but it's focused in a delicate place."

Krug also said that in the majority of cases parents do not witness the ingestion, making it hard to connect symptoms including loss of appetite, irritability and vomiting to the problem.