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Health Canada warns of hazards of button batteries

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TORONTO - Health Canada says reports of injuries and deaths resulting from people swallowing button batteries are on the rise.

It is warning that people should take extra care with the small, disc-shaped batteries, which are found in products ranging from musical greeting cards to watches, remote controls to flashing shoes.

The department says a swallowed button battery can block an airway or cause serious internal chemical burns in the esophagus in as little as two hours.

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Lithium button batteries that are between 20 and 25 millimetres in diameter result in the most serious injuries, especially when swallowed by children.

But Health Canada says even adults, especially seniors, have been reported to have inadvertently swallowed button batteries after confusing them with pills or food.

The department says button batteries should be safely stored out of reach of children; if it appears that a child or an adult has swallowed a button battery, they need immediate medical assistance.

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If swallowed, a lithium button battery needs to be removed within 2 or 2.5 hours before serious damage or death can occur

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