

Health Canada Issues Button Batteries Warning

Swallowing the 20-25 mm diameter batteries can be fatal, the agency's reminder message says.

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With lots of toys and personal electronics given as Christmas gifts every year, the possibility of a serious, even fatal injury from swallowing the 20-25 mm diameter batteries in some of these presents is a timely warning. Health Canada issued one prior to Christmas about these "button batteries."

An increasing number of cases of people swallowing button batteries and being injured are being reported to manufacturers and health officials, the agency said in the warning release, which says the disk-shaped batteries are typically found in remote controls, musical greeting cards, watches, calculators, flashing jewelry and shoes, key fobs, books, and other small electronic devices.

"The size, shape and energy storage properties of button batteries make them hazardous if swallowed," according to the agency. "A swallowed button battery can block an airway or can cause serious internal chemical burns in the oesophagus in as little as two hours. The 20 to 25 mm diameter lithium button batteries result in the most serious injuries, especially where young children are involved. In cases of swallowing, the batteries were found loose on the floor by young children, in garbage bins, or on countertops, taken directly from a package, or removed from household products. Even adults, particularly seniors, have unintentionally confused button batteries with pills or food and been injured."

Health Canada recommends storing new or used button batteries where they can't be unintentionally found or swallowed. Other recommendations are:

- But only household products with secure battery compartments that cannot be easily opened by children.

- Make sure the button batteries in household products stay securely contained in the products.
- Supervise children when they use products containing button batteries.
- Do not allow children to play with button batteries or remove them from household products.
- Store button batteries away from food and medicine and out of the reach of children.
- Scan floors, tables, and counters for loose button batteries.
- Dispose of button batteries so children cannot gain access to them.
- Take care when changing the button batteries in a product that they are not mixed in with pills, medicine, or food.
- Realize that to anyone with poor eyesight, button batteries look just like pills or candy.
- If you think a child or adult has swallowed a button battery, immediately seek medical attention.
- 20 and 25 mm lithium batteries can be identified by their imprint codes, CR2032, CR2025 or CR2016, which are located on the face of the battery.

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