

Valley boy recovers after swallowing battery

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PHOENIX - Karla Rauch remembers the day that would forever change her son's life.

"It was October 16th, 2010," Karla recalls. "Emmett woke up and wasn't quite acting himself. He had a fever and I just knew something wasn't quite right. We took him in to an urgent care (after) which they set us home with a diagnosis that he just had a cold or a flu and that his symptoms would probably get worse before they get better."

They did get worse but Karla wasn't convinced it was a cold, and took Emmett back to the doctor.

"On our way to the doctor he started vomiting up blood. So at this point I knew it was something extremely serious," Rauch said.

A chest X-ray would reveal a button battery lodged in Emmett's esophagus.

"Within 10 minutes we were in an ambulance to Phoenix Children's Hospital," Rauch said.

The button battery had been there for four days leaking acid into Emmett's upper chest.

Doctors at Phoenix Children's Hospital took the baby right into surgery.

Karla remembers, "They came out and said Emmett was in extremely critical condition. They put him in the extreme ICU and told us they weren't sure if he would make it or not. "

So Karla, her husband Michael, and their older son Ethan waited and prayed.

"Where the battery was lodged in his esophagus was close to his heart. With lots of cases in recent years, batteries can saw through the aorta and bleed out and kill children," Rauch said.

Emmett miraculously would be the exception. Doctors say he is the worst case of a child who's survived.

The list of medical procedures Emmett has endured is staggering for child so young.

"To date he has had 28 surgical procedures," Rauch said. "He's had his esophagus reconstructed, his airway partially reconstructed, we still go in every three weeks to have a procedure done on his esophagus. He can't eat by mouth and there is no plan to in the near future. And he eats through a feeding tube and as you can see Emmett requires a trach to breath. He also on a ventilator at night and requires nursing care throughout the night in our home."

It has been a long 18-month road for the Rauch family, one his mother feels might have ended that day in the operating room had it not been for the doctors at Phoenix Children's Hospital.

"He's lived 8 months of 2011 in the pediatric ICU, so it's become our home and we love the nurses and physicians there," Rauch said. "Especially because they changed our lives and saved our little boy. When you see the passion that they have for these children, it makes you realize that you are in a safe place and they will do anything to help save your child's life."

Rauch is now on a mission to keep what happened to Emmett from happening to other children. She wants to make people aware of the dangers of button batteries.

"When they told me it was a battery, I was completely shocked. Never did I realize anything in our home even used one of



these batteries," Rauch said. "Emmett just was crawling around one day and popped it out of the back (of the remote control) and swallowed it. Just put it in his mouth like any other toddler would do.

Rauch has some advice for anyone with toddlers or small children.

"We are working on making it a law to put a screw in the back, that's our goal but no more just throwing batteries in the drawer - make it safe," she said. "Go through your home and realize this is a serious issue."

As for little Emmett, the road is still long and the future uncertain. But slowly he is healing and getting his energy back.

"We're staying positive and he has such a fighting spirit, that we just fight with him and try to move forward," his mom said.

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