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Button Batteries Causing Severe Injuries to Children, ER Visits Skyrocket

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Posted: May 14, 2012



Button batteries (the kind that once were mainly used for watches, which in turn were devices people used to wear on their wrists and waistcoats to make sure they were home in time to meet the icebox repairman before cell phones were invented) are an increasing source of injury, and doctors report that the number of emergency room visits due to tots ingesting the now-ubiquitous small objects [has skyrocketed](#).



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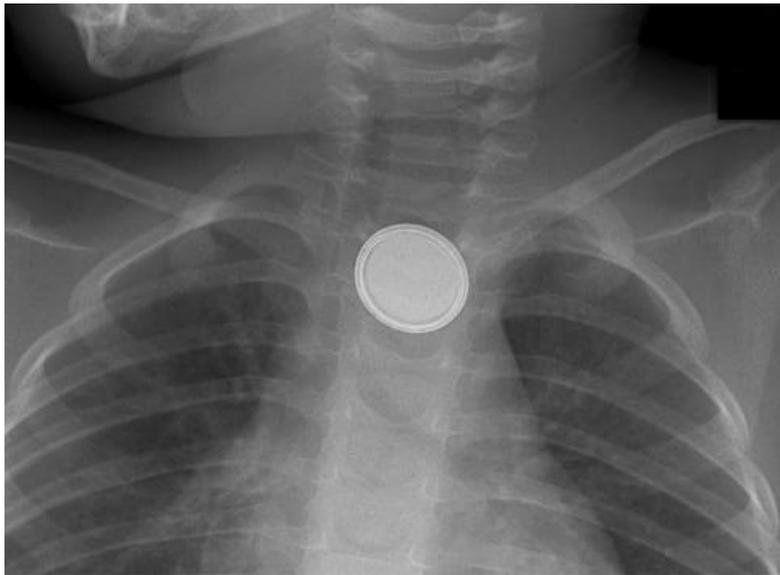
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Once reserved mainly for watches, button batteries are now used to power an increasing number of shrinking devices, many of which are toys or even electronic greeting cards used by small children. A new study tracking hospital visits between 1990 and 2009 observed that battery-related ER visits in young children nearly doubled in the period researchers looked at, and terrifyingly, noted that button batteries carry greater risks than standard-sized batteries as they can become “lodged in the esophagus and start an electrical current flowing through the tissue- without kids showing any signs of immediate injury.”

One of the authors of the new study on battery-related ER visits and injury, Dr. Gary Smith of the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children’s Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, explains that a tiny battery can cause severe injury in a small child rapidly:

“If a child swallows a button battery, the parent might not see it happen and the child might not have symptoms initially- and the clock is ticking... We’ve seen children in less than two hours have severe, severe injuries from button batteries getting caught in the esophagus.”



Smith explains that button battery-related injuries can often occur without a parent realizing the child has quietly ingested the item, and that time is of the essence when the injury occurs:

“The real way to prevent these (emergencies) is to prevent the event from happening in the first place... If (parents) suspect something, they need to get to the hospital and get an X-ray done immediately.”

The study was published in the journal *Pediatrics*.