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Video: Beware Button Batteries

A new report finds a rise in ER visits for button battery ingestion

By Children's Health Team | 5/29/12 10:00 a.m.



Coin-sized button batteries can be found in many household items, from remote controls to watches and electronics — not to mention children's toys. Just because they're everywhere doesn't mean they're safe, though.

A new report finds the number of emergency room visits for button battery ingestions has doubled over the past 20 years- and kids 5 and under are seen the most.

Ellen Rome, MD [[LINK: http://my.clevelandclinic.org/staff_directory/staff_display.aspx?doctorid=1275](http://my.clevelandclinic.org/staff_directory/staff_display.aspx?doctorid=1275)], a pediatrician at Cleveland Clinic Children's Hospital [[LINK: http://my.clevelandclinic.org/childrens-hospital/default.aspx](http://my.clevelandclinic.org/childrens-hospital/default.aspx)], did not take part in the study but offers insight.

"Button batteries are tiny, they look like a great toy, they look fun to swallow," Dr. Rome says. "It turns out they burn holes in your esophagus or in your intestines and they can be really, really dangerous and life-threatening."



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Researchers say there were 66,000 battery-related emergency room visits by children under age 18 in the United States between 1990 and 2009. Button batteries accounted for 84 percent of all battery-related ingestions, especially among children aged 5 years and younger.

If swallowed, batteries are not only a choking hazard for children, but can severely burn a child's throat or kill a child in as little as two hours. Researchers recommend increasing prevention efforts, especially for younger children.

Dr. Rome says parents need to be vigilant.

"Button batteries aren't just in toys," she says. "They're in hearing aids, they're in your car key opener, they're in other little gadgets around the house that you may entertain your kids with when you're answering the phones. Don't let them play with anything other than kid-approved items because anything that goes in a toddler's or a baby's hands can go into the toddler's or baby's mouth."

Complete findings for this study are in the journal *Pediatrics* [[LINK:](#)

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2012/05/09/peds.2011-0012.abstract> .

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