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# Hearing Aid Batteries Still a Threat: Use Caution!

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*Dear Tucson Audiologists Patients and Colleagues,*

*For years, dispensing Audiologists have been cautioning patients and parents to take care around hearing aid batteries. The threat of accidentally ingesting a battery is a real one and posed significant danger when batteries contained mercury. The caution was codified in the FDA hearing aid information booklet (<http://hearinghealthmatters.org/hearingeconomics/2011/regulation-of-hearing-aids-in-the-us-part-5/>) that is still part of every hearing aid dispensing transaction and is required reading for patients and/or parents of children fitted with amplification.*

When mercury-free hearing aid batteries (<http://hlnews.net/category/topics/technology/hearing-aids/hearing-aid-batteries>) became the norm in 2011, we thought the risk of battery ingestion was greatly reduced. Though that may be so for the risk of mercury poisoning, it is not the case for other problems brought about by button batteries of all types. We learned this from a Medscape review (<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/763749?sssdmh=dm1.784103&src=nldne>) of a new article published in Pediatrics (<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/6/1111>):

The number and rate of battery-related emergency department (ED) visits for children younger than 18 years nearly doubled between 1990 and 2009. The risks were highest for children younger than 5 years and often involved the small, coin-like batteries that power toys, games, and watches and for younger children.

... And we might add, hearing aids. The study clocked over 65,000 children taken for battery-related emergency visits over a 20 year period. A fifth of those children were age one or younger.

The review confirms that most batteries pass harmlessly through the digestive tract, but it also pointed out that the big danger is when button batteries become lodged in the esophagus where they

“can damage surrounding tissue by several mechanisms, most importantly by causing electrolysis of tissue fluids and generating hydroxide at the battery’s negative pole.”

At TAI, we will continue to urge our patients to

1. keep their batteries in a safe place
2. NOT put used batteries in old prescription bottles
3. bring used batteries to us and we’ll take care of the recycling

*Presented for your reading consideration by*

*Your Tucson Audiologists,*



Holly Hosford-Dunn  
AZ DA8890



Sharon K Hopkins  
AZ DA8758

*(<http://tucsonaudiology.files.wordpress.com/2009/08/holly-sharon2.jpg>)Holly Hosford-Dunn PhD*

*and*

*Sharon K Hopkins MA*

### *References*

Sharpe, Rochett & Smith. Pediatric battery-related emergency department visits in the United States, 1990–2009. *Pediatrics*, 129(6). June 1, 2012, pp. 1111 -1117. (doi: 10.1542/peds.2011-0012)

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