

## Swallowing Tiny Batteries Big Problem in Kids

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The number of children injured by swallowing batteries – especially the small, round button batteries used in such things as remote controls – rose significantly over a 13-year period, researchers found.

From 1997 through 2010, an estimated 40,000 children younger than 13 were treated in emergency rooms after swallowing a battery, according to a report in the Aug. 31 issue of *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.



The yearly rate more than doubled over that time, from 1,900 in 1998 to 4,800 in 2010. The 2.5-fold increase was statistically significant at  $P < 0.001$ .

The finding comes from analysis of the Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) National Electronic Injury Surveillance System, according to Jacqueline Ferrante, PhD, and colleagues at the CPSC and the CDC.

The researchers also found, using other CPSC databases, that there were 14 battery-related deaths in children younger than 13 from 1995 through 2010 -- 13 of them between 2002 and 2010.

The button-type batteries were involved in 12 of the deaths, the researchers found, and the remaining two were also probably from button batteries, based on the similarity in incident scenarios or causes of death.

After the data was compiled, three more fatal cases were reported – two in 2011 and one in 2012 – all involved button batteries.

Nearly 72% of the battery-swallowing incidents involved children younger than 5, the researchers found, and most children were treated and released or examined and released without treatment. About 1 in 10 was admitted to hospital.

In 69% of the cases, the battery type was reported -- 58% involved button batteries and 11% cylindrical batteries. The battery source was named in 17% of the cases and included toys, flashlights, remote controls, watches, hearing aids, and light-up jewelry.

Symptoms are relatively nonspecific, the researchers noted, making the diagnosis difficult, especially if no one has seen the child swallow the battery.

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