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Battery Ingestion Harms Toddler

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Jaden Mayfield was doing what probably any two-year-old boy would do one afternoon when he found something shiny ...he put it in his mouth. Little did he or his family know that his age-appropriate curiosity would turn into a long hospital stay.

The small shiny object that Jaden swallowed was a nickel battery from a garage door opener. His mom, Amanda, had recently changed out the batteries on the device and left the old one in a dish on the kitchen sink. Jaden's grandmother, Carol Worley, said that nobody knows for sure how or when Jaden got ahold of the battery, or whether he swallowed the used battery or the second new battery from the two-pack his mother purchased. Brian Mayfield, Jaden's dad, was just out of sight in another room when he heard the toddler making choking sounds. He checked on Jaden immediately. "He ended up throwing up a little bit but was still breathing. Brian took him to the hospital right away," Worley said.

At the hospital, X-rays showed that Jaden had the battery stuck in his esophagus. He had emergency surgery to remove the battery, but it had already burned a hole in his esophagus. He was transferred to the Women and Children's Center in Roseville for long-term care. Worley said that the battery damage is dangerously close to an artery, and Jaden could have long-term damage to his arteries. His family expects that he will be in the hospital for at least a month.

"He can talk but he still has a hole in his esophagus, so he eats through a tube in his nose. He is frustrated and angry and he wants to go home. He is an active boy and can't play with his twin," Worley said.

The Mayfield family wants to spread the message about how dangerous everyday items can be. Worley said that she has raised children, grandchildren and foster children and has never seen such serious damage done from swallowing a foreign object.

"I've never, ever had anything like this happen," Worley said.

The National Capital Poison Center in Washington, DC runs a Button Battery Ingestion Hotline for doctors and medical staff. The center estimates that 3,500 people swallow "button" or disk-shaped batteries every year in the United States. These batteries power everything from toys to hearing aids to singing greeting cards. They are common in household electronics that young children are in contact with on a daily basis. The National Capital Poison Center said that most of these batteries pass harmlessly through the body without damage, but there is a chance that the battery will get caught in the esophagus. When the battery gets hung up, like it did in Jaden's

case, it can cause tissue damage.

"An electrical current can form around the outside of the battery, generating hydroxide (an alkaline chemical) and causing a tissue burn," the center's website notes.

There is always a chance that the battery got stuck without any signs of choking. The National Capital Poison Center has the following tips for when a child (or anyone) swallows a battery.

- Immediately call poison control at 1-800-222-1222.
- If readily available, provide the battery identification number, found on the package or from a matching battery.
- In most cases, an X-ray must be obtained right away to be sure that the battery has gone through the esophagus into the stomach.
- Don't induce vomiting. Don't eat or drink until the X-ray shows the battery is beyond the esophagus.
- Watch for fever, abdominal pain, vomiting, or blood in the stools. Report these symptoms immediately.
- Check the stools until the battery has passed.

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