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Swallowing Coin Lithium Batteries – A Serious Threat to Small Children

Posted January 6, 2012 – 3:30 pm. Heather Monackey

You took care to ensure your child was only given age appropriate, safe toys for the holidays. But, it is imperative to remain vigilant in protecting your children because dangers children lurk in the most unlikely places.



For example, batteries in common items like remote controls, calculators, watches, car key fobs, flameless tea lights and bathroom scales often have powerful batteries inside, which look like a coin.

These batteries are extremely dangerous if swallowed. Many of the any devices that use coin lithium batteries have easy-to-open battery compartments, and these gadgets are often left within the reach of children. They may even be favorite play-things or used to entertain kids.

Additionally, the batteries are often “invisible” to consumers because they come already inserted in devices.

If a coin-sized button battery gets stuck in a child’s throat, the saliva triggers an electrical current. This causes a chemical reaction that can severely burn the esophagus in as little as two hours. It is important to know that

- Damage can continue even AFTER the battery is removed.
- Repairing the damage is painful and can require feeding tubes, breathing tubes and multiple surgeries.
- In some cases, children have died.
- Spotting the problem is difficult. Children can usually breathe with the battery in their throat.

What You Can Do

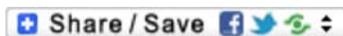
- Look in your home for any item that may contain coin-sized button batteries.
- Place devices out of sight and out of reach of small children.
- Keep loose or spare batteries locked away.
- Share this life-saving information with caregivers, friends, family members and sitters.

If parents or caregivers suspect that a child has swallowed a coin-sized button battery, they should get help fast:

- Go to the emergency room immediately. Tell doctors and nurses that it might be a battery.
- If possible, provide the identification number found on the battery’s package.
- Do not let the child eat or drink until a chest x-ray can determine if a battery is present.
- Do not induce vomiting.

Information compiled by [Safe Kids Wake County](#). WakeMed is the sponsor organization for Safe Kids Wake County. WakeMed is also home to the Triangle’s only dedicated [Children’s Emergency Department](#) and [Children’s Hospital](#).

Data provided by Dr. Toby Litovitz and the National Capital Poison Center based on incidents reported to U.S. poison control centers. Dr. Litovitz, M.D., is executive and medical director of the National Capital Poison Center and a key advisor to this effort.



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