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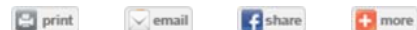
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Babies and button batteries don't mix

By Crystalee Beck, ksl.com Contributor

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SALT LAKE CITY -- As babies do, Emmett had been playing with the family DVD remote. When the bite-sized battery fell out the back, he instinctively put it in his mouth and swallowed it. Later, on the day of his first birthday party, baby Emmett woke up with an unusual, concerning fever.

In a series from every parent's worst nightmare, he started coughing up blood. The parents rushed for medical help and soon found themselves with doctors looking at an X-ray of his tiny frame, and a coin-sized circular disk lodged in his throat.

Three terrifying hours and a surgery later, parents Karla and Michael Rauch of Peoria, Ariz., learned their son's throat had suffered severe damage from toxic battery acid. It had burned two holes, and he had to have four inches of his esophagus removed.

Since that fateful day in October 2010, Emmett lived in and out of the ICU for nine months, had multiple cases of collapsed lung, and endured 19 surgeries along with almost 200 X-rays.

All this heartache came from one small button battery.

"It was something we never could have imagined," said Karla Rauch, "I tell parents that I used to think fluke accidents happened to other people. Please, be cautious and aware."

During Emmett's eight month stayed in the ICU, his parents endured four occasions when doctors

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didn't know if he'd make it through surgery.

"From this I would say I have learned most: one, how fragile life is and that nothing should be taken for granted, and two, the importance of safety awareness and protecting your children," said Rauch.

With eight months sitting by Emmett's bedside, feeling helpless to help him, Rauch couldn't bear to see other kids come into the hospital with the same incident. She decided to put her heartache to work.

She created [Emmett's Fight](#), an organization with the mission to "educate families of the dangers of button batteries, take action, and give support to those who have suffered."

Both during and after his hospital stay, she and Emmett have appeared on multiple news shows, with medical tubes in tow, to help spread awareness.

"We want to tell everyone so they don't have to experience what we did. Everybody has batteries in their home and they're an invisible danger," she said. "It is healing to know that we're saving another child's life and saving another parent the tears we've cried."

Emmett's Fight is a featured partner with [The Battery Controlled](#), a new organization formed in 2011 by Safe Kids USA and Energizer. The mission of The Battery Controlled is to "shine a light on a growing issue and provide easy steps that parents and caregivers can take to prevent injuries and death to children."



On the statewide level, [Safe Kids Utah](#) seeks to prevent unintentional childhood injury in Utah, although its website does not currently have information about battery button ingestion.

Janet Brooks, vice president of Safe Kids Utah, and Child Advocacy manager at Primary Children's Medical Center in Salt Lake City, is aware of the dangers of battery ingestion.

"(Battery ingestion) is definitely is an issue, and we've been seeing more and more of it at the hospital," said Brooks. "It takes as little as two hours after swallowing for the lithium to take acidic effect. Damage can continue after it's been removed.

"New safety risks are popping up as technology changes, and electronics are a huge part of our lives today. It only takes a second," she said. "We all have to take an active role. Search your home and secure devices or batteries to be out of reach of kids. Share this information with friends, family, babysitters and grandparents."

Although the Utah Center for Health Data did not have data regarding Utah children swallowing button batteries, the [National Capital Poison Center](#) estimates more than 3,500 people of all ages swallow button batteries in the United States every year.

More than 3,500 people of all ages swallow button batteries in the U.S. every year. - National Capital Poison Center

"One of the most common surgeries we do is the removal of foreign objects," said Mary Anne Douglas, director of Surgical Services at Primary Children's Medical Center.

According to Douglas, Primary Children's does 12 surgeries a month remove a "foreign object" from either the esophagus or airway, with coins being the most common object.

"Kids are naturally curious and babies will especially be attracted to shiny object like a coin or button battery," said Douglas. "A coin may not be as serious of a problem depending where it is lodged but a button battery can cause burns in the esophagus or airway from a buildup of hydrogen ions. It must be removed immediately."

To educate about the dangers of swallowing foreign objects, over the past several years, the Primary's Surgical Services department has added to poster representing items that have removed from children, ranging from babies to teenagers. They present the poster in their annual open house and at health fairs where they teach children and parents to safe guard their airway and esophagus.

The poster, "Kids Will Put Anything in Their Mouths," shows tacks, Barbie shoes, buttons, hat pin, small fingernail clippers, Christmas ornament tops, LEGO pieces, small toys, pins, batteries, and many types of coinage.



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"A myriad of things get swallowed. Awareness of small objects and removal of these from small children is a key to safety," said Douglas. "For older children, teaching them not to chew on pen caps and other objects is important."

As for Emmett Rauch, he's unable to eat anything by mouth – yet. He will have a G-tube connected to his belly for a few years.

After 16 rough months in his short two years of life, Emmett's current prognosis is stable. With a trach for a secure airway, he's able to breathe and act more like a 2-year-old.

"He's quite a fighter and just always happy, a sweet little spirit who loves life," said Rauch. "He's easy to fight with because he just doesn't know any different."

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–Karla Rauch

According to his mother, there will be several years with the trach, but doctors say it won't be forever. He just needs to grow and get stronger, as his lungs are in bad condition.

"It's been such a scary thing, but we know he survived for a reason – to help save other kids' lives."

Learn more about how to protect your children at www.emmettsfight.com.

The Battery Conrolled offers these safety tips:

- Look in your home for any items 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.

The [National Capital Poison Center](#) shares **what to do if someone swallows a button battery:** Immediately call the 24-hour National Battery Ingestion Hotline at 202-625-3333 (call collect if necessary), or your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222.

And for techies, there's even an app for that. The [American Association of Poison Control Centers](#) has released its first Poison Help app. The free iPhone app allows users to click on the Poison Help logo to connect to their local poison center 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Crystalee Beck is a writer, marketer, and traveler living with her husband in Ogden. Follow @Crystaleelee on Twitter or email her at delightedtowrite@gmail.com.

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KSL's public inspection files, including the Children's Television Programming Reports and the DTV Quarterly Activity Station Report, are available for viewing during regular office hours at the KSL Broadcast House.

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