



Oklahoma toddler's death puts spotlight on battery dangers

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JAY — The day after Christmas, 2-year-old Brianna Florer was laughing and jumping around with her older brother and two sisters opening presents at her grandparents' home.

The next day the precocious blond-haired toddler was dead.

An X-ray of her tiny body showed the "killer" was a shiny, silver button battery.

"On Saturday she was fine," maternal grandfather Kent Vice said. "It was a perfect Christmas."

Brianna had not been feeling well for a couple of days — throwing up and running a low-grade fever, he said.

Late Sunday, Brianna threw up blood, and her body turned a blue color. Her parents, Brian and Stephanie Florer, who live in rural Delaware County, called the Jay ambulance, which met them at a convenience store to check Brianna's condition.

"She threw up again," Vice said. "It was a massive amount of blood, and they rushed her to the Grove hospital."

The Grove physicians quickly diagnosed Brianna's problem, and she was taken by ambulance to St. Francis Hospital in Tulsa, where she was rushed into surgery, he said.

Bad weather had grounded all medical transportation by helicopter, Vice said.

"They operated on her for 2½ hours, but they couldn't stop the bleeding," Vice said. "They believed the battery ate through to her carotid artery by way of her esophagus."

"One minute she is perfect, and the next minute she is dead," Vice said. "We had no idea when she swallowed it (the battery)."

The family learned Brianna probably swallowed the battery within six days of her death.

Vice said he wants to do something about button batteries. "I want to keep these things out of houses," he said. "They are dangerous."

A Go Fund Me account has been set up to help the family with funeral expenses. To access the account log on to <https://www.gofundme.com/xwgrfwfg>

Eddie Johnson with the state medical examiner's office said the child's autopsy is pending, and it would be two to four months before an official cause and manner of death is known.

Other instances

There were 53 reported cases in Oklahoma of children and adults swallowing a button or disk battery this year, said Randy Badillo, Oklahoma Poison Control Center senior specialist. "No fatalities have been reported to us," he said.

Normally the battery passes through the digestive system, he said.

"But, if the battery lodges in the esophagus or digestive tract, it can open and release an alkaline substance that can cause corrosive or burning injuries," Badillo said.

From 2005 to 2014, there were 11,940 battery-swallowing incidents involving children under the age of 6 nationally, according to the National Capital Poison Center in Washington, D.C. Of those cases, 15 children died, and another 101 suffered major medical problems.

"These devastating outcomes occur in small children when batteries get stuck in the esophagus," said Dr. Toby Litovitz, center physician.

When a lithium button battery lodges in a child's esophagus, it causes an electrical current to go through the tissue, she said.

"The electrical current is causing more damage because it is splitting the water surrounding the button battery and forming hydroxide, which is an ingredient in lye. Imagine dropping little tiny drops of lye in one place in the esophagus," Litovitz said.

The lye substance perforates the esophagus and goes into whatever tissue is nearby — it can be the aorta or the trachea.

Serious complications also have been seen when small batteries are placed in the nose or ear — another situation where urgent removal is critical, Litovitz said. "The important thing to remember is — these batteries are everywhere."

Vice was close to his granddaughter. He handled caretaking duties for Brianna when she was an infant for three weeks after her parents returned to work.

"She never — not one time — had a bad day," Vice said, his voice cracking with emotion. "She was always happy and laughing.

"I took care of her — she was just an angel."

At a glance

Safety Tips

- Never leave batteries sitting out.
- Store spare batteries, and batteries to be recycled, out of sight and reach of young children.
- Check all household devices to be certain the battery compartment is secured shut.
- Only purchase products that require a screwdriver or tool to open the battery compartment, or that are closed with a child-resistant locking mechanism.
- Alert family members who wear hearing aids to the importance of keeping the batteries out of reach of small children at all times.
- Never put batteries in your mouth, to test, to hold, or for any reason. They are slippery and eas

BUTTON BATTERIES

Some common products that contain button batteries: remote controls, garage door openers, ba... calculators, digital thermometers, hearing aids, singing greeting cards, talking books, flash and pen lights, flashing shoes, toothbrushes, bedwetting monitors, key chains and flashing or lighted jewelry or attire.

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