

Baby Olie's case highlights danger of kids swallowing button batteries

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Swallowing a button battery has caused yet another child to almost lose his life.

As parents, we do our very best to ensure that our home is safe for our children. We buy toys that are BPA free, we follow the age appropriate guidelines, we baby proof the entire house, put medication far out of the children's reach and the list goes on. Unfortunately, beyond that which we can control, even the most innocuous of items could pose a hazard to our children.

That's exactly what happened in the case of the toddler Olie Lennon, from West Sussex in the United Kingdom. He was in critical condition, with 'catastrophic burns' to his trachea and oesophagus after swallowing a button battery.

The tragedy occurred on May, 29, when Olie started persistently vomiting black liquid. Clearly aware that something was amiss, Olie's parents brought him to the doctor who could not put his finger on what was the cause of the vomiting. He advised them to keep a close watch on him.

At that point in time, it did not occur to anyone that swallowing a button battery could have been the cause. How could anyone possibly guess?

The next morning, Olie still looked awfully ill and his parents were perplexed. It wasn't until Olie's mother Chrissy, who was dieting and thus carefully monitoring her weight, went to weigh herself and noticed that her weighing scale was not working due to a missing battery.

It then dawned on her that swallowing a button battery could be the reason Olie had those vile, black vomiting episodes. The shocking discovery made Olie's parents rush him to the hospital immediately.

Olie's operation lasted for an hour and a half but the nightmare didn't end there for Olie. He had to undergo eight more procedures to remove the battery and a 'miraculous 6-hour reconstructive surgery'.



This was the tiny culprit that caused massive damage to baby Olie!

Swallowing a button battery caused Olie to be in induced coma until early June. Unfortunately, when he was brought around, further complications arose. The battery had corroded and acid burnt his insides. A 1.2cm hole had formed in his trachea and his left lung had collapsed.

Olie was put in induced coma again. It was bad enough seeing their precious little boy so ill and going through so much pain, but it got worse when the doctors broke the heartbreaking news to his parents. They were told, quite honestly, that he could die.

He had a one in 10 chance of survival.

After spending close to two months in the hospital, Olie was finally given the green light to go home on July 17. But his life is far from normal. He is unable to eat solids and he can only groan.

However, to Olie's father, the very fact that he is alive is brilliant.

And that is true, for although what happened to Olie is nothing short of a tragedy, he is still lucky to have survived. There have been many other cases of children who have lost their lives by swallowing a button battery.

Olie's parents want to promote awareness about the dangers of swallowing a button battery. They wish for all parents to know the perils that lurk in the most common toys and household items. Losing Olie has since lead them to finding out other items that contain such batteries and

they have gotten rid of them.

Our heart goes out to little Olie and his parents and we hope that he will have a speedy recovery.

What we need to know about swallowing button batteries

Did you know that each year in the United States, almost 3000 kids – or one every three hours, ends up swallowing a button battery and either has serious internal injuries or dies?



About 3000 children die or suffer serious injuries every year, due to swallowing a button battery.

And the numbers are increasing.

There is even an international awareness week on button battery safety, aimed to raise worldwide awareness of the risks and dangers posed by these tiny killers.

What are button batteries?

They are coin-sized batteries that can be found in common household items such as toys, calculators, watches, remote controls (parents often overlook this), car locking devices, hearing aids, weighing scales, reading lights, flameless candles, talking books and musical greeting cards (most people wouldn't even think of this!).

Many of the above mentioned items have battery compartments that are either easy to open, or get loose over time. This makes it easy for kids to access them and leads to the potential danger of swallowing button batteries.

What hazards do they pose?

Contrary to popular belief, it is not a choking hazard. When swallowed, the saliva in a child's throat triggers an electrical current. This then leads to a chemical reaction that can cause cell death and burn through the oesophagus. It takes just two hours for this to happen!

The burn can continue even after the battery has been removed from the child's throat. The injuries can be severe and permanent. In some cases, the battery erodes right into the aorta and causes the child to bleed to death.

These tiny batteries pose such enormous risks to children. These horrific outcomes need to be prevented.

Safety tips to prevent children from swallowing button batteries

- Always pay attention to warnings and labels describing the dangers of button batteries in everyday products
- Check that the devices using button batteries have the compartments properly secured and do not allow easy access to the batteries or battery compartments
- Only buy toys that require a screwdriver to open the battery compartment
- Perform periodic checks on the devices to ensure that the compartments are secure
- Check your home every now and then, for items that contain batteries
- Dispose of used batteries immediately
- As far as possible, keep devices with such batteries, or the batteries themselves far from the reach of your children



Always check your remote controls for loose battery compartments.

In addition, do remember that young children should never be left unattended to. Even a few minutes of being alone can lead to catastrophic consequences. Remind yourselves, as well as the other caregivers, the importance of always paying attention to what the child is doing.

This also means that when you are with your child, you should not be looking at your smart phone, watching television or looking at your laptop.

It is of great importance that you speak to your helpers, or elderly parents about this matter. Show them what a button battery is and what common household items use button batteries. Stress the importance of safety and explain to them the dangers of swallowing button batteries.

Another similar danger is leaving your phone chargers switched on and unplugged. If your child puts your charger into his mouth, the consequences can be as dire as swallowing a button battery.

What to do if your child swallows a button battery?

Sometimes, in spite of how many precautions we take and just how careful we are, things happen beyond our control. In the unfortunate event that your child swallows a button battery, or if you suspect he did, act immediately!

Time is of essence so please, don't hesitate to rush your child to the A&E. Don't sit on it and speculate. Especially if your child displays any of the following signs, get medical attention as soon as possible:



Unusually coloured vomit is a telltale sign that your child could have swallowed a button battery.

- Nausea and vomiting
- Fever
- Coughing
- Abdominal pain
- Breathing problems
- Diarrhoea
- Discoloured or bloody stool
- Throat pain
- Refusal to eat or drink

Our heart goes out to baby Olie and we wish him a speedy recovery. We hope that this helps to promote awareness about the dangers associated with these tiny batteries. Let's do our best to keep our children safe!

Reference:

Channel News Asia

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