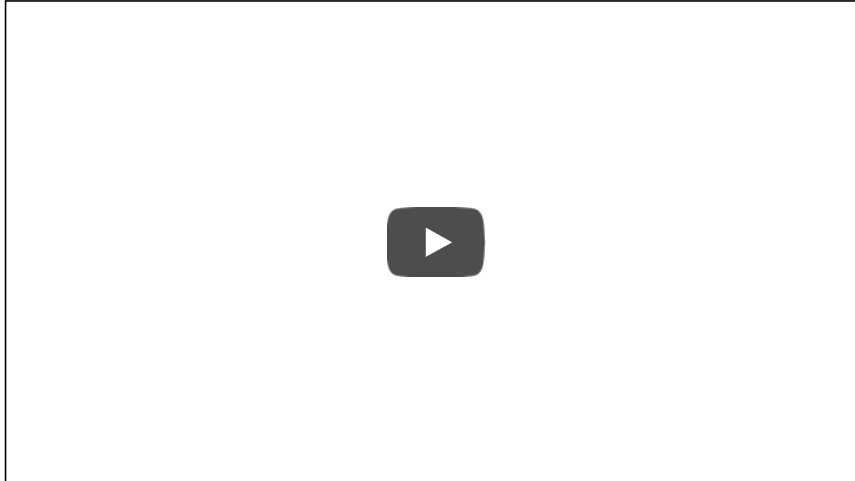


A warning before Christmas: Billings mom shares story of toddler's battery ingestion

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By Victoria Hill - MTN News



BILLINGS - A Billings mom is urging all parents to inspect this year's Christmas presents for button batteries.

Ki Bilstad is sharing her story after her daughter, 5-year-old Maci, swallowed one of the small, flat, round batteries when she was just 20 months old.

"Being told that your kid may not survive from something like this is a huge ordeal. You don't know how you're going to go on and be a mother to your other kids. You don't know how you're going to get through this, and all your focus is on your child. You just want her to be alive," Bilstad said.

Bilstad was unaware her daughter had ingested a button battery, and because Maci's symptoms were similar to an earache and teething, local doctors dismissed it as just that.

After Maci failed to show any signs of improvement, an X-ray showed the battery stuck in her esophagus.

She was flown to the children's hospital in Denver, where doctors placed Maci in a coma and performed surgery to remove the battery.

"The button battery that she had was a dead battery. It didn't have enough in it to run an electronic, but there was still enough lithium to kill somebody," Bilstad said.

Maci wasn't the only child to experience a battery ingestion incident that year.

In 2014, there were 2,129 children under the age of 6 in the U.S. that ingested a button battery. One of those cases resulted in death.

According to the National Poison Data System, five children died in 2015 and four children died from button battery ingestion in 2016.

Bilstad said the doctors believe the battery was in Maci's esophagus for about four days.

She decided to keep the battery and stores it in a safe place to serve as a reminder and a warning to other parents.

In their case, she was aware of the dangers button batteries carry and kept all batteries stored high up on a shelf. But Bilstad believes a family member might have changed a watch battery and left it on the nightstand.

"We're always in a hurry. Do a daily check. Is there anything sitting out and about? I couldn't imagine another person having to go through this. Unfortunately, this happens a lot more often than it should. I think that more awareness needs to happen so that little ones don't lose their lives," Bilstad said.

Although the button battery was removed from Maci's esophagus, it is a lifelong issue for the 5-year-old.

Bilstad said overall, her daughter is doing fine, but depending on how she develops, another surgery is always possible later in life.

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She said other families are trying to raise awareness, including Phoenix-based nonprofit organization [Emmett's Fight](#).

To learn more about the dangers of button batteries and see more statistics, click [here](#).

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