

After Nearly Three Months At Connecticut Children's, Baby Who Swallowed Button Battery To Return Home



Marisa Soto, of Vernon, talks about her son's injuries after he ingested a button battery in December.



By **Mikaela Porter**
mmporter@courant.com

MARCH 6, 2018, 6:00 AM | HARTFORD

Just over a year old, Cameron Soto did what a typical baby does while playing with toys — he brought one to his face and near his mouth.

In mid-December, Cameron ingested a three-volt, 20-millimeter lithium-ion battery — known as “button” or “coin cell” batteries, they are about the size of a nickel — and for two to four hours it burned Cameron from the inside. The mucus in Cameron’s esophagus completed the battery circuit and it began to charge, about two-thirds of his esophagus was burned as a result. His vocal chords were paralyzed for some time, but doctors expect him to recover.

“They were all playing in the room with my husband and he was playing with his toys and all of a sudden he turned around and just looked distressed,” Cameron’s mom Marisa Soto said Monday afternoon at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center. “We knew that he had swallowed something just knowing the type of

kid he is, but we didn't know what. We thought he probably swallowed a LEGO or maybe there was a penny on the floor, a Barbie shoe or something. We would've never guessed it was a battery."

Soto and her husband, David, rushed Cameron to nearby Rockville General Hospital, she said Monday afternoon, where doctors arranged for an ambulance to bring the family to Connecticut Children's Medical Center.

Cameron didn't choke on the battery, it wasn't big enough for him to choke on, and it wasn't small enough to pass through his digestive system, so it stayed lodged until surgeons at CCMC removed it.

“

"The problem with these injuries is that they're not always apparent immediately."

— Connecticut Children's Medical Center ear, nose and throat specialist Chris Grindle

But after nearly three months at CCMC, including a month in which Cameron was in a medically induced coma, he is expected to go home to Vernon Tuesday to be with his parents and older brother and sister, 6-year-old Ethan and 4-year-old Lilly.

Soto said the battery burn led to swelling from the bottom of Cameron's brain to the top of his heart.

Cameron will have to relearn how to eat and swallow, how to talk, and even how to walk since he was sedated for so long.

"Everything is a whole different process now," Soto said.

Cameron had a tracheotomy, and there is still a tube stemming from his throat. In time, CCMC ear, nose and throat specialist Chris Grindle said the tube will be removed.

"The problem with these injuries is that they're not always apparent immediately," Grindle said. "The battery gets in there, it can start causing injury in about 15 minutes and then it can cause severe injury in under two hours."

Grindle said batteries like the nickel-sized one removed from Cameron are problematic because they are just small enough to get ingested.

Nationally, Grindle said more than 10 people have died as a result of ingesting button batteries in the last five years.

Grindle said signs or symptoms of button battery ingestion include discomfort, coughing, choking, avoiding food, spitting, crying and fussing.

"Over 3,500 people a year ingest a battery and most go on through," Grindle said. "That penny- to nickel-size is particularly bad. Fortunately they are rare, we've had three in the past five years" at CCMC.

