

2 Wants To Know Investigates: Button Batteries

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Written by
[Mark Geary](#)

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Greensboro, N.C. -- A tiny item in your home the size of a button can cause big problems for your child.

It's an item you might not even realize is there until it's too late. You'll find it inside musical cards, remote controls, book lights, keys, games and calculators. We're talking about a button battery. Thousands of families have learned a powerful and painful lesson...if a child swallows a battery, they can get seriously injured or even die.

Elizabeth Zook's 14-month-old daughter Amelia loves to explore at parks, playgrounds and at home.

"We spend a lot of time running after her going, 'Put that down! Don't eat that! Come back!'" Zook said.

Zook is just learning about a deadly danger that can hide in the most unlikely places, like a musical greeting card.

"You see them everywhere. My husband actually got one recently for Father's Day. It never occurred to me to worry about the batteries," Zook said.

Children often mistake the batteries for candy.

If they swallow one, Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center Doctor Adele Evans says, "The conduction of current actually cooks the tissue that's there."

Doctor Evans has seen a battery burn a child's throat.

"We've seen injuries where there's a very deep burn that the child spends a week to two weeks in the hospital with a feeding tube," she said.

Doctors x-ray children who swallow things. But, batteries and coins look nearly identical on film.

"We always have to remind ourselves to double-check and look for the extra rim. T

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he central rim suggests it's a battery, not a coin," Evans said.

Over the past two years, more than 4815 children have swallowed button batteries. Six have died.

Back at the park, Elizabeth and her friend Olivia Choplin plan to take action and remove all traces of the hidden danger in their homes.

"It never would have occurred to me that it would burn a hole in her throat. That's really scary," Zook said.

Choplin added, "I definitely will keep an eye out on that because we're planning to have more kids and I wouldn't have thought about it."

Button batteries are everywhere now, even in places you might not expect...like a bathroom scale.

So, what's the solution? Make sure any items with button batteries stay screwed shut so a child can't pry them out. Or, simply get rid of items with button batteries.

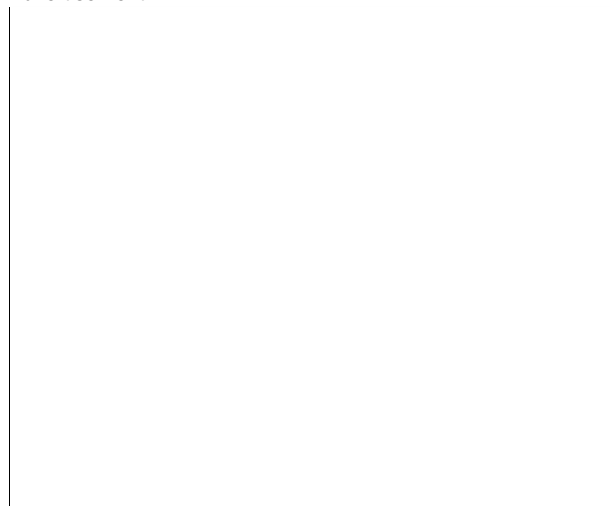
Button batteries can also cause permanent injuries when they get stuck in noses and ears.

If you think your child may have swallowed one of these batteries, call 9-1-1 or drive to the emergency room right away. Do not try to make your child vomit or give them anything to drink or eat.

It only takes about two hours for a battery to do serious damage.

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