


The dangers of swallowing button batteries

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COLUMBUS, OH (WABC) -- Mark and Susan Sadauskas's one 1-year-old son Max has always been a good eater but a recent incident at dinner made them worry about his health.

"Shortly after eating a couple of bites, Max threw up his food," mark explains. "He never had done that."

Immediately, Susan began retracing their steps and remembered finding a remote control on the floor an hour earlier. She quickly determined that her one-year-old must have grabbed it, opened it and swallowed the battery inside.

"I never would have thought that he could have gotten this little case off of this battery and ingest something like that," Susan says. "And they're everywhere."

Dr. Kris Jatana of Nationwide Children's Hospital in Ohio says because Max's parents reacted so quickly, they saved him from serious injury and may have saved his life.

"The clock is ticking from the moment the battery is placed inside the body and serious injury can occur within two hours." she says.

Most small batteries pass through the system. But dime size button batteries can become lodged in the esophagus of a toddler. An electrical current can form around the outside of the battery and cause a tissue burn. It can erode into the airway, even into the aorta, potentially requiring major surgery.

The problem is that the early symptoms are often very subtle.

"Children are either asymptomatic or they'll have non-specific symptoms such as a cough, a fever, they're more irritable; symptoms that are consistent with a common viral illness that we see in children," Jatana explains.

A recent study found that a majority of young children who swallow these batteries, like Max, remove them from a device first. The danger lurks not only in remote controls and electronics, but also in musical greeting cards, flashing jewelry and toys.

"We were extremely lucky, it could have been a lot, lot worse," Max's mother explains.

If you think your child has swallowed a button battery, you should call the poison center hotline or go to an emergency room immediately, even if they seem completely fine.

You need to get an x-ray right away to make sure the battery is not stuck in the esophagus.


For more safety tips on button batteries, visit the Poison center's website: www.poisson.org/battery/tips.asp.

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