

# Sheffield toddler's life saved by city doctors after swallowing battery



Clare Skill and daughter Sophie Skill, whose life was saved at Sheffield Children's Hospital last year after she swallowed a battery.

## Chris Burn

06:39 Saturday 06 February 2016

**A Sheffield toddler's life was dramatically saved by city doctors after she swallowed a miniature battery.**

Two-year-old Sophie Skill, from Owlthorpe, swallowed the miniature battery and spent six days on life support following an emergency operation after the battery acid burned through her lung.

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Clare Skill and daughter Sophie Skill, whose life was saved at

Her family are now telling her story to warn parents of the dangers of button batteries – and launch a major fundraising campaign to say thank you to the Sheffield Children's Hospital specialists who kept her alive.

Mum Clare said: "I really want to make other parents aware of the implications of what can happen if your child gets hold of one of these batteries.

"I had no idea of the dangers, but now if I ever see one again it will be too soon."

Sophie was playing in her front room at home when her mum noticed her become agitated and start to cry.



Clare Skill and daughter Sophie Skill whose life was saved at

"She was crying excessively like I had never heard before, and she was holding the back of her neck," Clare said.

"She was so distressed, and I just knew she had swallowed something. I had only turned my back for second, but my heart was beating so fast as I thought what she could have swallowed."

Clare took Sophie to Sheffield Children's Hospital where an X-ray showed he had swallowed a lithium battery the size of a 10p

piece.

Within two hours of arriving, she was rushed to surgery to have it removed.



Clare Skill and daughter Sophie Skill whose life was saved at

Clare said: “As soon as they knew what it was, it all became much more urgent.”

The battery was removed from her food pipe – but as the inflamed area around her throat had swollen over, they were unable to immediately detect a hole caused by the corrosive caustic acid.

After 24 hours, nurses noticed she wasn't recovering properly from the operation and more tests and a second X-ray uncovered the hole in her throat that was showing signs of infection. They also discovered the acid had burned through her lung.

Sophie was immediately rushed to intensive care where they put in a chest drain and put her on ventilator to help her breathe.



Clare Skill and daughter Sophie Skill whose life was saved at

Clare said: “I was just so scared, thinking the worst. After a week, she had a CT scan and it showed the hole wasn’t healing and was in fact getting bigger because the acid was continuing to corrode her oesophagus.”

Sophie was sent to theatre again, with surgeon Sean Marven fitting a special ‘T’ tube from the hole to her stomach to drain fluid out of her body. Tissue was taken from Sophie’s side and put around the hole to allow it to heal.

She was then put on life support for six days to recover from the surgery.

Clare said: “She was put under general anaesthetic at least eight times during her eight weeks in hospital.

“She was ventilated six times and spent three weeks on intensive care. It was petrifying seeing her like that. She was in pain, and I just wanted so much for her to be better. I realise now that if it wasn’t for Mr Marven putting that ‘T’ tube in, she wouldn’t be here

today.”

Sophie, who swallowed the battery in July, was finally discharged in September after her throat healed.

She now has to take an alkaline tablet each day, but has no lasting damage.

Clare said: “She is fantastic now, running around like nothing ever happened. She is a really happy little girl, and is looking forward to celebrating her third birthday next month.”

Now the family want to give something back to the hospital to say thanks for saving Sophie's life, with grandfather John Johnson hoping to lead 100 kind-hearted walkers on a Five Peak Challenge.

Dad Wayne said: “By fundraising we want to help in any way we can, to repay them for what they have done for Sophie, because if it wasn't for them she wouldn't be here.”

The Five Peaks Challenge will see entrants take on the peaks of Pen-y-Ghent, Whernside, Ingleborough, Great Shunner Fell, and Great Buckden Pike over three days in June to raise money for The Children's Hospital Charity.

So far 25 people have signed up, but John hopes the number will rise to 100.

John said: “Sophie had so many mountains to climb in her treatment, so we wanted to do

something that would represent that and present a challenge for us.”

The money they raise will help the charity's Make it Better new wing appeal.