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'If you could fix this, why wouldn't you?'

By [Michelle Esteban](#)

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Summary

When Kylen Carrillo's parents rushed him to the hospital, doctors thought he'd swallowed a coin. But an X-ray revealed it was a lithium button battery the size of a nickel that was lodged in his throat, and it burned a hole in his esophagus.

[STORY](#)[VIDEO](#)

Story Published: Nov 23, 2010 at 11:20 PM PST | Story Updated: Nov 23, 2010 at 11:32 PM PST



Kylen Carrillo is seen in a hospital gown in this photo provided by the family.

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SEATTLE -- When Kylen Carrillo's parents rushed him to the hospital, doctors thought he'd swallowed a coin. But it was much worse.

"Your heart plummets," said father Patrick Carrillo.

An X-ray revealed a lithium button battery the size of a nickel lodged in his throat.

The curiosity of a 13-month-old had gotten Kylen in trouble. He had tipped over a charging station, and a battery left in a drawer had spilled out.

"This was a carelessness thing on my part for leaving the battery in that drawer," said the boy's father.

Doctors surgically removed the battery, but Kylen's condition worsened. His parents learned the 3-volt battery burned a hole in their son's esophagus, and the damage could be lethal.

"At that point, you break down. We're sitting there in tears," said Patrick.

Doctors airlifted Kylen to Seattle Children's Hospital.

"The whole time I'm thinking, 'Am I going to get there and find out my son has died?'" said Patrick.

At the time, the Carrillos had no idea 15 other children died after swallowing button batteries. The Problem Solvers have discovered Kylen's brush with death is not an isolated case.

KOMO News requested federal records kept by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. In just the first six months of 2010, seven children accidentally swallowed button batteries.



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Digging deeper, the Problem Solvers discovered 15 button-battery related deaths reported to National Poison Centers around the country. Kids in 11 of those cases died in the last six years.

Elaina Redding, 2, of Colorado bled to death after swallowing a battery from a DVD remote.

Thirteen-months-old Aidan Truett of Ohio went into cardiac arrest. His parents have no idea where that battery came from.

But the Poison Control Center says the majority of these deaths trace back to a common device most of us have in our homes -- a remote control.

"We could see he was going downhill," said Patrick. "It was horrible."

"It was terrifying that night," said Shawna Carrillo, Kylen's mother. "We thought we were going to lose him."

Doctors say once inside the body, batteries set up an electrical current. The battery Kylen swallowed ate away at his throat.

"The current actually creates damage to tissue that keeps dying over time," said Patrick.

"You're not leaking a chemical out of a battery, but instead the battery sets up an electrical current through the tissue, and it causes a hydrolysis reaction," said Dr. Toby Litovitz, director of the [National Capital Poison Center](#) in Washington, D.C.

Litovitz compared it to pouring drain opener down the child's throat. She sounded the alarm on button batteries 25 years ago, and she's even more concerned nowadays as batteries have doubled in voltage.

And they're everywhere. They power singing greeting cards, thermometers, remote control devices, phones, PDAs, watches, flashing jewelry, and toys. It's likely at least one electronic in your home has a button battery.

"The serious cases - the cases that have life-threatening affect or permanent disability or fatal affect - have increased almost sevenfold over that 25-year period," Litovitz said.

The doctor says more than 80 kids nationwide are permanently damaged from their injuries. Some can't talk. Others have to rely on a feeding tube.

Litovitz's findings prompted the CPSC to [issue a warning in 1983](#). But she insists with today's higher-voltage batteries, a warning is not enough.

"We need help from the industry, and we need help from the regulators," she said.

So what are regulators doing to prevent deaths? The Problem Solvers went to the CPSC.

In a written statement, CPSC said it "encourages electronics manufacturers to redesign products to ensure the battery compartments are secure and only accessible through the use of a tool."

The associations that represent battery makers and device manufacturers said they also encourage better safety measures.

But that's all voluntary; Litovitz and Kylen's parents won't be satisfied until a mandatory standard is adopted.

"The problems are devastating, serious. And they keep happening," Litovitz said.

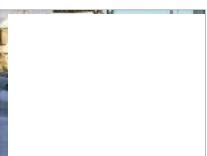
"Someone has to take the lead on this," Patrick said. "What if it was your child? If you could fix this, why wouldn't you?"

The National Poison center has a 24-hour battery ingestion hotline that accepts collect calls at 202-625-3333.

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Comments (14)

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-6

How scary....I really hope stricter regulations are put on these. something so dangerous shouldn't be so easily accessible, especially to wandering little hands. Blessings and prayers to the families of the children killed in this horrible way.

Reply [1 reply](#) · active 2 hours ago[Report](#) **nobelprizeme** 85p · 2 hours ago

+7

um, thats what parents are for, not government regulations.

Reply

[Report](#) **phother** 90p · 6 hours ago

+18

This is really unfortunate, I feel for the family and the child. I hate to be the bearer of bad news though, but a lot of things which are beneficial to us in our daily lives are also harmful to us in some cases. Cars, Guns, Sunshine, etc. You can try and change things, ban them or replace them. Or you can use them responsibly and restrict their use to people old enough to use them.

Reply [2 replies](#) · active 28 minutes ago[Report](#) **GreatBluejedi** 100p · 2 hours ago

+7

and sometimes no matter how hard you try to put things up and away from little fingers, kids will still get into stuff

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[Report](#) **strike123** 77p · 28 minutes ago

+1

Well said....very well said

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[Report](#) **1st_admendment** 97p · 6 hours ago

+15

how is a battery in a drawer going to fix batteries in a remote control.

its tragic but accidents happen. maybe parents should be more vigilant to keep things out of the babies reach

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[Report](#) **InsomniacDreams** 85p · 6 hours ago

+1

Normally I am against more regulations, but I see nothing wrong with requiring devices with a lithium battery to have a screw instead of a cheapo snap-on thing for the battery compartment. It would also make things last longer, seems like the first thing to go on TV remotes is the battery lid anyway.

And guess what? It only takes a few seconds for a tot to swallow something he shouldn't. So I wouldn't be too hard on the parents in these cases. Can anyone say they kept their eyeballs glued to the kid(s) every second? It's not too realistic to expect that.

Reply

[Report](#) **Lookitsme** 108p · 5 hours ago

+8

While I certainly feel bad for the kids and the parents here, I have a hard time believing that entire industries are going to retool their products in response to an apparently incredibly rare problem, particularly when retooling isn't going to eliminate that rare problem.

In the case detailed in the article, the battery was not in a device so this potential regulation would not have helped at all.

In many cases, these little button batteries are used because the devices they are powering are very small - are we really going to try to get elderly folks to have to pull out a jeweler's screwdriver and try to extract/replace a microscopic phillips screw every time they need to replace their hearing aid batteries? I just don't see it happening...

Reply

[Report](#)

 Saneman 102p · 5 hours ago

+8

"This was a carelessness thing on my part for leaving the battery in that drawer," said the boy's father.

Nothing else needs to be said or done. This country seems willing to destroy itself to make everyone and everything "safe." There is no "safe."

Some mountaineers and sky divers live long lives and die of old age. Some librarians die from accidents. Every single failed Liberal program or policy that is still costing us billions of dollars a year while stifling innovation and depriving us of very useful products have been justified with that ever present sentence, "If just ONE child could be save isn't it worth it?"

Well, no it isn't. Stuff happens and always will.

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[Report](#)

 cm257n7 101p · 5 hours ago

+7

So in this case the parent admits "carelessness" which really is neither here nor there. Accidents are accidents. Please tell me how regulating these types of batteries would have helped in this case? It shouldn't be up to the government or whoever to make sure we all know how dangerous batteries are. We should know that already and as parents be as diligent as possible in keeping these kinds of items out of reach. I'm glad it turned out OK in the end. From the sounds of it he's a very lucky little boy.

Reply

[Report](#)

 Pink 94p · 5 hours ago

-5

Wow! I sure hope these new regulations will help! At first, I thought why, but then I remember these are lithium batteries which are somewhat different than your standard alkaline AA's that you'd typically use for remotes!

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[Report](#)

 Mumblix_Grumph 118p · 5 hours ago

+10

If we could fix this, we would...but realistically, we can't

No legislation is going to keep kids from putting things in their mouths.

Reply

[Report](#)

 deniseh1006 106p · 2 hours ago

-1

Why not have a screw to reinforce a battery cover? They have been doing it on kid's toys for years. If someone has a remote and a small child at least put duct tape on the cover and keep them on top of something. When our son was small we kept ours on top of the entertainment center, and there was a gate blocking him from getting to the electronic equipment (TV, Stereo, speakers, dvd/vcr player, etc.). You can never be too careful. We also have a locking cabinet to keep drain cleaner and other harsh chemicals in.

Reply

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 A7117 -42p · 1 hour ago

+2

It's all about the parents folks. It's all about the parents. You can't kid proof or idot proof everything on the market, it's not feasable. I've raised four kids and 4 grand kids and the word "no" and us keeping an eye on them has worked real well. I'm not looking to give the government another opportunity to interfere in my life and this would be another opportunity. It is in deed the parents that are responsible for the health and well being of their children. Not watch dog groups and not the government. The government does NOTHING right.

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