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Small batteries, big dangers

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NBC -- Parents of toddlers know children will put just about anything into their mouths, but when that something is a disc battery the consequences can be deadly.

"These children are often brought to the pediatrician or emergency department and they're misdiagnosed because their symptoms are so typical of more common illnesses," warns Dr. Toby Litovitz, director of the National Capital Poison Center

Dr. Litovitz is the medical author of a new study detailing the severity of battery ingestion accidents.

She says children have been swallowing small batteries for decades, but the dangers have become much worse because of the changing size and increasing voltage of batteries.

So what's different? The battery size and voltage.

"Because they're larger in diameter they're getting stuck in the esophagus of the child when the child swallows," she explains.

When a lithium battery gets lodged, it creates an electrolysis reaction and results in a serious chemical burn that eats through tissue.

"It would be like little drops of something like a drain cleaner in your child's esophagus," Dr. Litovitz warns. "The critical thing is you only have two-hour window to get that battery out."

About 3,500 cases of battery ingestion are reported to Poison Centers each year and more than a dozen children have died.

The majority of kids swallowing disc batteries are younger than four years old.



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There is a 24-hour national battery ingestion hotline.

Just dial 202-625-3333 or call your local poison center if you think your child has swallowed a battery.

NBC

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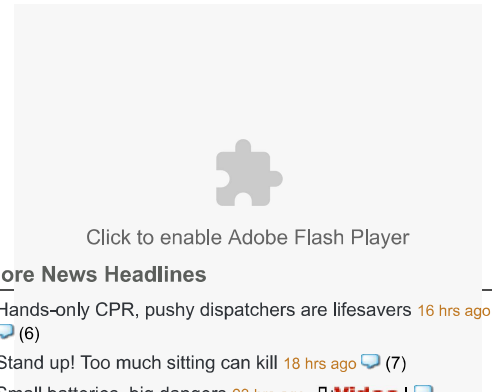
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