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Swallowing a button battery is very serious and medical attention should be sought immediately!

Trauma specialists at The Montreal Children's Hospital point out that a swallowed button battery can generate an electrical current and chemical leak which could seriously damage tissue in less than two hours !

MONTREAL, March 25 /CNW Telbec/ - To mark National Poison Prevention week, Trauma specialists at The Montreal Children's Hospital (MCH) of the McGill University Health Centre are urging parents to seek immediate medical attention if their child has swallowed a button battery. Parents should not assume the tiny battery will harmlessly pass through their child's system. Not only is the battery a choking hazard, but it also causes serious tissue damage by generating an electrical current, chemical leakage or by putting physical pressure on adjacent tissues. In some cases it can even result in death.

"A button battery can easily lodge in a child's esophagus, larynx, pharynx, trachea or stomach. When swallowed, the battery corrodes quickly and oozes chemicals which can severely burn tissue in under **two hours**," says Dr. Dominic Chalut, MCH Toxicologist / Emergentologist. "Even if there are no symptoms, all children who swallow button batteries must be seen immediately in a Pediatric Emergency Department preferably one with a Trauma Centre."

Dr. Chalut points out swallowing these tiny batteries can lead to complications such as: esophageal perforation, tracheoesophageal fistulas, bleeding, infection, vocal cord damage, and in extreme cases death.

"The number of children and teens suffering from serious complications due to the ingestion of button batteries is increasing," says Debbie Friedman, MCH Trauma Director. "This is likely because these small batteries are becoming more and more common. Measure a mere 20 mm in diameter, button batteries are used in musical greeting cards, touch and learn baby books, watches, toys, hearing aids, cameras, digital planners, LED flashlights, and other gadgets. The batteries are not always well secured and because they are round like candy and shiny, they are attractive to young children who will eagerly play with them and inadvertently stick them in their nose, ears or mouth. These incidents are not exclusive to young children, at the MCH, we recently treated a teen that inadvertently swallowed the button while chewing on the end of a pen equipped with a flashlight. He sustained an oesophageal burn extending up to 30 centimetres and a small perforation; he remained in hospital under the care of numerous specialists for 10 days.

The National Poison Data System in the United States has been documented that between 2007-2009 there was an alarming rise 6.7 fold increase in the number of serious or fatal cases due to the ingestion of button batteries. At The Montreal Children's Hospital about 250 patients are seen annually for the ingestion of foreign objects, including button batteries. Approximately 15% of the cases seen require urgent medical treatment and hospitalization.

Ms. Friedman says if your child swallows a button battery take him to an emergency room immediately and when you arrive clearly explain to a health professional that a battery was swallowed and give a precise timeline of events. Ms. Friedman says if the battery is lodged in your child's throat it is must be removed within **two hours** to avoid serious damage.

For further information:

Quebec poison control centres : **1 800 463-5060**

To speak with a trauma specialists at the MCH please call:

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514-934-1934 x 31560

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