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swallowed battery

Parents, Beware: Lithium "Button" Batteries Can Kill

Study finds that small children can pry small batteries out of common household products; a swallowed battery can damage the throat, or worse.

By Adam Bean

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by Maria Rodale

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what you can do

Double-check that anything containing these small batteries is kept out of reach. Know what to do if your child swallows one.

RODALE NEWS, EMMAUS, PA—Small, penny-size, flat button-style batteries that power everything from the TV remote to singing greeting cards these days are easily accessible by tiny hands. The result: Children under the age of 6 are swallowing them more frequently, leading to serious injury and even death. A new study published in *Pediatrics* makes clear the increasing danger of swallowed batteries.

THE DETAILS: In the study, researchers analyzed 8,648 cases of battery ingestion reported to the National Battery Ingestion Hotline. The majority of cases of swallowed batteries involved small children, though a significant number also occurred among the elderly. Among the cases involving kids, 62 percent occurred when children removed batteries from products, and 30 percent occurred when kids found the batteries loose out of the package.

"Button batteries lodged in the esophagus can cause severe tissue damage in just two hours," write the study authors. Serious complications may include esophageal strictures (severe narrowing), perforations, and vocal cord paralysis. Among the 8,648 ingestion cases reported in the study, 13 resulted in death. The batteries generally don't cause choking. What happens is, body tissue is exposed to the battery's current, which results in the formation of hydroxide that can burn through the esophagus.



Batteries in some electronics can put young children in danger.