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For More Information

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Button Battery Safety

Button batteries are seriously harmful to children if swallowed or placed in the ears or nose. They are also a choking hazard.

What are button batteries?

Button batteries are small, shiny, coin-shaped batteries. They are sometimes called lithium batteries.

Where are they located?

Button batteries are found in a variety of commonly used household objects.

- Calculators
- Cameras
- Child toys and singing books
- Electronic toothbrushes
- Flameless candles
- Flashing jewelry or decorations
- Flashlights and laser lights
- Handheld games
- Hearing aids
- Key fobs
- Singing greeting cards
- Watches



What are the risks of button batteries?

Young children are at most risk. Small and shiny objects, like button batteries, are attractive to young children. They are most likely to place objects in their mouths, nose, or ears.

A swallowed button battery or one that is stuck in the nose or ear can cause serious injuries. The most serious

damage happens from swallowing a button battery, which can sometimes result in fatal injuries. When a button battery is swallowed, saliva triggers an electrical current. This causes a chemical reaction that can severely burn internal tissues and organs. Serious internal chemical burns to the esophagus (throat), stomach, and intestines can develop in less than two hours.

Button batteries can also cause damage if they are stuck in the nose or ears. Repairing the damage caused by button batteries can require ongoing medical care, including breathing tubes and multiple surgeries.



What are the symptoms?

Sometimes there are no symptoms. Children may still breathe and act normally after swallowing a battery. Signs and symptoms may include: choking, coughing, drooling, vomiting, decreased appetite, fever, throat or abdominal pain, and fussiness. If the battery is stuck in the ear or nose, there may be blood or other fluid (drainage).

Button battery safety tips:

- Know which products in your home use button batteries. Check that all products using button batteries have screws or strong tape to secure the battery compartment.
- Actively supervise young children whenever they are using or are around products with batteries.
- Some newer batteries release a blue dye when they come into contact with bodily fluids (e.g., saliva). With these batteries, watch for blue colouring in young children's mouths and/or on their hands.
- Store loose batteries and battery-powered products that are not in use out of the sight and reach of young children. Whenever possible, use a locked cabinet or container.
- Only adults should change batteries. Do not allow children to play with batteries.
- When visiting family members and friends, be aware that their homes may have button batteries that are easily accessible to young children.

Selected References

- Government of Canada. (2017). *Battery safety*. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/toy-safety/battery-safety.html>
- Nationwide Children's Hospital. (2019). *Button battery safety*. Retrieved from <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/family-resources-education/health-wellness-and-safety-resources/helping-hands/button-battery-safety>
- Nemours KidsHealth. (2020). *Household safety: Button batteries*. Retrieved from <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/safety-batteries.html>

GETTING HELP

- If you suspect that your child has swallowed a button battery or has put one in their nose or ear, go to the emergency room right away. Do not wait until you see symptoms to get help.
- If it is quickly available, give 5-10 mL of honey on your way to the hospital IF the battery was swallowed in the last 12 hours, AND your child is 12 months or older and is not allergic to honey. Do not give honey if your child is vomiting or cannot swallow. Do not delay going to the hospital to get honey.
- Do not make your child throw up, and do not make your child eat or drink anything other than the honey.
- Immediately tell the admitting staff about the battery ingestion.