

## **SWALLOWING COIN LITHIUM BATTERIES**

### *A Serious Threat to Small Children*

Today, cars start with the push of a button, greeting cards light up and sing, books record our voices and thousands of electronics operate by remote control. To keep our gadgets small, slim and sleek, many are powered by coin lithium batteries. But because many of these devices are not designed for use by children, the battery compartments can be very easy to open. As use of coin-sized button batteries has become more widespread, so has the risk that a small child will swallow one. Tragically, this can cause life-changing disabilities or even death. And it is preventable.

#### **Who Is At Risk**

In 2010 alone, there were more than 3,400 reported swallowing cases in the U.S. involving all sizes of button batteries. This resulted in 19 serious injuries, and some children died.\* The threat is growing – fast. Swallowing cases resulting in serious injury or death to children has more than quadrupled in the past five years (2006-2010) compared to the five years prior (2001-2005). The most serious cases are associated with 20mm diameter batteries, about the size of a nickel, because they can easily lodge in a small child's throat. All fatalities and 85 percent of major injuries were among children 4-years-old and younger.

#### **The Danger**

Basically, when a battery gets stuck in a child's throat, the saliva triggers an electrical current. This triggers a chemical reaction that can severely burn the esophagus in as little as two hours. Once the burning reaction begins, it can continue even after the battery is removed. Sadly, repairing the damage is painful and can require feeding tubes, breathing tubes and multiple surgeries. In some cases, children who have swallowed button batteries have died. Batteries placed in the nose, ear and other areas can also cause severe tissue damage.

#### **Treatment + Prevention**

To keep children safe, parents should keep battery-controlled devices out of sight and out of reach and lock away loose batteries. They should also tell friends, family members, sitters and caregivers about this important issue.

If a coin-sized button battery is swallowed, we urge parents to follow these steps:

- Go to the emergency room immediately, and tell doctors and nurses that it might be a battery.
- If possible, provide the medical team with the identification number found on the battery's package.
- Do not let the child eat or drink until a chest x-ray can determine if a battery is present.
- Do **not** induce vomiting.

#### **Additional Information**

To learn more about how to protect your family, visit [TheBatteryControlled.com](http://TheBatteryControlled.com), [Facebook.com/TheBatteryControlled](https://www.facebook.com/TheBatteryControlled) or contact the National Battery Ingestion Hotline at 202-625-3333.

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\* Dr. Toby Litovitz, key advisor to this effort and MD executive and medical director, National Capital Poison Center