Why Button Batteries are so Dangerous?

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Button batteries burn. Often, the first anyone knows that a child swallowed a button battery is when they start vomiting blood. Sadly, this is usually too late as irreparable damage has already occurred. If you suspect your child swallows a button battery, get immediate medical help, even if they do not appear to be in distress. Swallowed batteries burn through a child's oesophagus in just 2 hours, causing serious injury and even death. This article outlines why button batteries are so dangerous and what you can do to avoid this happening in your home.

What are button batteries?

Button batteries and lithium coin batteries are the small, round, batteries you find in toys, cards, key chains, remote controls, flashing shoes, hearing aids and numerous other everyday objects. They look to be completely harmless and you might assume that if a child swallowed them, they would pass straight through. Sadly, it is always not what happens.

If a child swallows the battery and it gets stuck at any point in its journey; then it continues to releases its charge. This generates corrosive caustic soda which burns through the tissue and causes horrific injury and internal bleeding. Serious complications have also been seen when small batteries are placed in the nose or ear, therefore immediate removal is crucial.

Top safety tips

- Keep remote controls and other items with batteries away from children.
- Check that all battery compartments on toys and other items are

secure. Your child should not be able to open them.

- Use strong tape to secure compartments that children can open or that may pop open if the item is dropped.
- Only purchase products that require a screwdriver or tool to open the battery compartment, or that are closed with a child-resistant locking mechanism.
- Make sure children play with toys that are right for their age and developmental stage. Only buy toys that have the CE safety mark. Check second-hand toys very carefully.
- Be mindful that older children often share unsuitable toys with a younger sibling.
- Keep all spare or used batteries out of sight and out of reach of children.
- Store them away from food items as small batteries can be mistaken for sweets.
- Do not change or insert batteries in front of small children.
- Do not leave batteries in your bag, purse or beside locker.
- Inform your whole family about the dangers of button batteries.
- Recycle used batteries safely, as these too are dangerous
- If a family member wears hearing aids alert them to the importance of keeping batteries out of reach of children at all times. This can pose a burden as hearing aid users generally remove the batteries from the aids each time, they take the aids off. Hearing aid batteries are also of similar size to medications and can easily be mistaken, so take extra care with aids.
- Be especially cautious with any product that contains a battery that is as big as a 2 cent or larger.

What should you do when a battery is swallowed or placed in the ear or nose

1. Act fast, do not wait for symptoms to develop
2. Do not try and make them sick.
3. Call the National Battery Ingestion Hotline immediately at **800-498-8666** and take them to your nearest A&E.

4. Do not give them anything to drink or eat until an x-ray shows the battery is beyond the oesophagus as they may need an anesthetic in order to be operated on.
5. Batteries in the nose or ear also must be removed immediately to avoid permanent damage.

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Hope you enjoyed this article on why button batteries are so dangerous.

References:

HSE Website

National Capital Poison Centre Website