



Maryland Poison Center
University of Maryland School of Pharmacy

1-800-222-1222

Poison Prevention Press

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Tips for preventing battery ingestions

Children:

- Check and secure (tape) battery compartments on toys and household products regularly
- Store batteries out of reach and sight
- Do not leave batteries sitting out loose
- Do not allow children to play with batteries

Adults and seniors:

- Do not store batteries near pills or in pill bottles
- Do not store loose batteries in your pockets or purse where they may be confused with pills
- Do not leave batteries loose on the bedside table
- Do not put a battery in your mouth to check the charge or to hold it while you are changing your hearing aid battery

Did you know that...

- ~62% of reported button battery ingestions by children under 6 years old involved batteries removed from the household product or toy by the child?
- 13 deaths and 73 major outcomes were described in an 18 year study of battery ingestion calls reported to poison centers?

Button Batteries: Tiny But Dangerous

Button batteries power many common household items. They can be found in items such as clocks, toys, hearing aids, cameras, watches, remote controls, musical greeting cards, calculators, portable electronics and other everyday items. Because these batteries are very small, a young child can easily swallow one without their parent realizing until much later. These ingestions can have serious outcomes.



Most batteries that are swallowed pass through the body without harm. However, batteries that become stuck in the esophagus (the tube between the throat and stomach) may result in severe injury. When a battery is stuck in the esophagus, it can cause severe burns or damage to tissue around the area where the battery is. Injury can begin to occur in as little as 2 hours. As soon as it is thought that a battery is missing, call the poison center (1-800-222-1222). The specialist in poison information will gather information and recommend that the child go to the nearest hospital. The specialist will also call the hospital to give them recommendations on how to manage the battery ingestion. An X-ray should be done. If the battery is in the esophagus, it should be removed right away. If it is in the stomach, it can pass naturally, but bowel movements should be checked to make sure the battery passes within 7 days. Batteries not found after 7 days need another visit to the doctor or hospital for a repeat x-ray.

Injury from battery ingestions has become more severe in recent years. A more powerful, larger lithium battery is very common in household products. Its size is between that of a penny and a nickel, allowing it to become stuck more easily. Deaths caused by swallowing a button battery are most common with this type of battery. Injuries can also happen when smaller batteries are put in the nose or ear.

Children most often get hold of button batteries by removing them from a toy or household item. There are also cases where children get hold of batteries that were lying loose on the table or they remove them directly from a package of batteries they find in the home.

While button battery ingestions are most common in young children, adults over the age of 60 years account for a large number of ingestions as well. Adults may mistake the battery for a pill or they may hold the battery in their mouth while getting ready to place it in their hearing aid. Adults are treated the same as children...call the poison center right away.

It is important to remember that a button battery can be stuck in the esophagus even if the person is not coughing or complaining of pain or any other symptoms. Call the poison center as soon as it is noticed that a button battery is missing. This quick action may save a life.