

# Battery ingestion not uncommon in children; caregivers and physicians need education

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Ten years of case studies at a pediatric hospital and a thorough literature review have shown that it is not uncommon for children to ingest small "button" batteries, either through swallowing or inserting the batteries into their noses.

In a paper presented at the 2009 American Academy of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery Foundation (AAO-HNSF) Annual Meeting & OTO EXPO in San Diego, researchers revealed that a significant lack of knowledge about the dangers of button batteries exists in the lay population and in healthcare providers.

Button batteries are miniature disc batteries that are typically used to power hearing aids, watches, calculators, and many commonly used items, including small toys and musical greeting cards. Each year, more than 3,000 people of all ages in the U.S. unintentionally swallow these batteries, according to the National Capital Poison Center in Washington, DC. Sixty-two percent of battery ingestions involve children under the age of 5, with a peak incidence in 1- and 2-year-olds.

While many children who ingest button batteries recover with few long-term health issues, some develop long-term complications that significantly deteriorate quality of life, such as tracheostomy-tube or gastrostomy-tube dependence, vocal paralysis, and septal perforation with saddle nose deformity. The authors say expeditious identification and treatment of button battery ingestion is crucial, for which continuing education must be provided to pediatricians, primary care, urgent care,

and emergency room care providers, and otolaryngologists.

The authors also concluded that increased public awareness is necessary to diminish the incidence of such ingestions. Industry changes, including improved packaging and button battery markings, will also be fundamental to this process.

Source: American Academy of Otolaryngology

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