

Button Battery Safety

Button or coin-shaped batteries (Picture 1) power many things (devices) we use every day. Examples are (Picture 2):

- key fobs (car keys)
- remote controls
- toys, games, talking books
- watches
- flashing jewelry
- flashing shoes, clothing
- musical greeting cards
- candles, tea light candles
- decorations, ornaments
- medical equipment, meters
- hearing aids
- thermometers
- bathroom scales
- calculators
- cameras



Button batteries are small and shiny. They can range in size from a pill to a quarter. Since they are little, you may not easily see when they fall out of a device. A child can pick up, swallow, or put them in their nose or ear before you know. These batteries may still have power in them even though there may not be enough to make a device work. (To get rid of used batteries, take them to a hazardous waste collection site or a battery store. Some stores will accept them for disposal.)

A button battery or any battery in the body can cause life-threatening injury. The most serious damage happens if your child swallows it. A battery that is stuck in the esophagus (the food pipe or tube that connects the throat to the stomach), can cause serious damage to tissue inside the body in as little as 2 hours. The battery reacts with saliva and lets off an electrical current that burns the tissue. If the injury is very severe, your child may need many surgeries. People have died from burns caused by swallowing button batteries.

What to look for

If your child swallows a button battery, the symptoms might look like a cold.

- fever
- irritability
- throat pain
- not wanting to eat or drink
- wheezing, difficulty breathing, coughing
- choking, gagging, problems swallowing, vomiting

If your child puts a button battery in their nose or ear, they may have:

- irritability
- fever
- pain or swelling around the ears or nose
- fluid drainage or bleeding from the ears or nose

Sometimes there are no symptoms.

What to do

If you think your child has swallowed or put a button battery in their nose or ear, **go to the nearest emergency department (ED) right away. Every minute counts.** For more information, call the National Battery Ingestion Hotline at 800-498-8666.

- If your child is over 12 months old and you think they swallowed a button battery in the last 12 hours, you can give 2 teaspoons of honey before taking them to the ED. Repeat this up to 5 more times. Wait 10 minutes between each dose of honey. Stop, if your child vomits or cannot swallow. **Do not delay going to the hospital to obtain honey.**
- Do NOT make the child vomit or let them eat or drink.
- Your child will typically get an X-ray to show if and where a battery is in the body.
- A button battery stuck in the nose, ear, or esophagus, must be taken out as soon as possible to stop further injury.

Staying safe

- Check every battery-powered device in and around your home and anywhere your children stay or play. Make sure that the battery case is shut tight and secured. It is best to use devices that can only be opened using a tool, such as a screwdriver. If the case is not secure, keep the device where your child cannot see or reach it. Re-check all battery cases to be sure they stay secure over time.
- Do not let small children play with things that might use button batteries. Keep these devices out of their sight and reach. If that is not possible, watch them carefully while they are playing with things that use batteries.
- Store all loose batteries in a locked cabinet or box, out of reach or sight of children.

Share this information with other people, so everyone can stay safe.