Small, shiny, and appealing to children, button batteries are everywhere and could be a hidden danger in your home. More than 3,000 button batteries are ingested each year in the United States. Button batteries can cause severe injury and even death if ingested. Button batteries also can be harmful when children put them in their noses and ears. The key to preventing these injuries is to keep button batteries out of the hands of young children. Following is information about button batteries and what parents and care providers can do to help childproof their homes.
WHAT ARE BUTTON BATTERIES?

Button batteries are small, round, metallic batteries found in games, toys, and other devices like remote controls, key fobs, and cameras. As more homes use these small electronics, the risk of these batteries getting into the hands of curious and crawling infants and young children increases.

WHEN ARE BUTTON BATTERIES DANGEROUS?

Button batteries can harm a child if the battery gets caught in the ear, nose, or throat because the batteries produce a charge even when they no longer can power devices. This charge can injure the tissues in the nose; injuries in the ear canal may include hearing loss.

When a button battery is swallowed and lodged in the body, the electric currents can cause significant tissue injury even within 2 hours. Death also can result from hemorrhaging (significant blood loss).

WHAT YOU CAN DO

• Be aware of button batteries in your home and where they are located.
  • Remote controls
  • Games and toys
  • Key fobs
  • Thermometers
  • Hearing aids
  • Calculators
  • Bathroom scales
  • Electronic jewelry
  • Cameras
  • Holiday ornaments
• Make sure the battery compartments of all electronic devices are secured and taped shut. (Battery compartments are not always secure or may open when the device is dropped.)
• Products like electronic jewelry and holiday ornaments should be kept out of sight and reach of children if the batteries cannot be secured and taped shut.
• Store loose batteries out of sight and reach of children.
• Remember to keep purses and other bags out of reach if they hold key fobs or other devices that use button batteries.

IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD HAS INGESTED A BUTTON BATTERY

When a child ingests a button battery, his symptoms could be virtually absent or similar to those of a common infection. This makes it challenging for health care professionals who are evaluating the child.

If you think your child has ingested a button battery, it’s important to take your child to the emergency department for immediate evaluation. All health care professionals need to consider any metallic foreign body in the nose, ear canal, or esophagus as a button battery until proven otherwise.

If your child has swallowed a button battery, it needs to be removed right away to minimize local tissue damage. After the battery is removed, the area from which the battery was removed needs to be examined and treated if needed. Follow-up care is important to make sure no additional care or treatment is needed.

Source: Section on Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery (Copyright © 2013 American Academy of Pediatrics)

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

For more information visit HealthyChildren.org.