

Your child and button batteries



Button and lithium coin batteries are the small round batteries found in lots of toys and everyday objects.

They can be extremely dangerous for children if swallowed – especially lithium coin batteries – and can kill within hours.

Why are they so dangerous?

Most button batteries pass through the body without a problem. But if a button battery, particularly a lithium coin battery, gets stuck in the throat or gullet, energy from the battery can make the body create caustic soda (the chemical used to unblock drains).

This can burn a hole through the throat and lead to serious internal bleeding and death. Lithium coin batteries are most dangerous as the higher voltage means more energy is released, creating more caustic soda. The reaction can happen in as little as two hours. All button batteries are very dangerous if they get stuck in a child's nose or ear.

What products use these batteries?

These small batteries are found in many toys, gadgets and other objects you'll find around the house, including:

- watches
- key fobs
- calculators
- hearing aids
- children's toys
- small remote controls
- musical greeting cards
- children's thermometers
- flameless candles and nightlights.

Who is at risk?

Children under 6 are most at risk. But older children can be fascinated by these small batteries and the objects that contain them too.



How can I keep children safe?

- Keep products with batteries well out of reach if the battery compartment isn't secured with a screw.
- Store all spare batteries out of children's reach and sight, ideally in a high-up, lockable cupboard.
- Avoid toys from markets or temporary shops as they may not conform to safety regulations.
- Teach older children that batteries are dangerous and not to play with them or give them to younger brothers or sisters.
- Remember that even used batteries can be dangerous, so recycle them safely.

What are the symptoms?

Unfortunately, it may not be obvious that a battery is stuck in a child's throat. They may be breathing normally, or simply develop cold or flu-like symptoms.

What else do I need to be aware of?

If you suspect your child has swallowed a battery, the most important thing is to act fast:

- Take them straight to the A&E department at your local hospital or dial 999 for an ambulance.
- Tell the doctor there that you think your child has swallowed a battery. If you still have the battery packaging or the device containing the battery take this with you to help the doctor identify the battery type and chemistry.
- Do not let your child eat or drink.
- Do not make them sick.
- Do not wait to see if symptoms develop.