



Australian Paediatric Surveillance Unit
Information for Parents and Public
Severe Injury Related to Disc Battery (SIRDB)

The Australian Paediatric Surveillance Unit is conducting a study to collect information about severe injury related to swallowed or inserted button batteries in children.

Button batteries are found in many household products e.g. toys, earphones, TV remotes, flameless candles, torches, ornaments, musical greeting cards, watches, hearing aids, etc. Button batteries come into our homes as part of these products, as individual batteries purchased as replacement batteries, products purchased or given as presents, or items brought in by visitors, in party bags, or as promotional gifts. Button batteries sometimes have specific battery packaging - they may be loose in product packaging or already secured inside a product.

What do we mean by a disk battery related injury?

Serious injuries may result if your child swallows a button battery or inserts it into a body opening. Injuries are particularly serious if the battery lodges inside the body and remains there for some time before being removed. The coin-sized lithium button batteries can lodge in the throats of children, where saliva immediately triggers an electrical current, causing a chemical reaction that can burn through the oesophagus (food pipe) in as little as one hour causing severe permanent damage.

Are injuries due to swallowed or inserted disk batteries increasing?

Increasing numbers of injuries have been reported in the United States. Increased injuries are correlated with the increasing use of button batteries in many different products that come into our homes. There have been at least two deaths due to disk battery related injury in Australia. Poisons Information Centres and Emergency Departments have also seen increasing numbers of children with battery related injuries.

Why are we conducting this research study?

We believe that injuries due to swallowed or inserted disk batteries are increasing, but we don't have reliable national data collection in Australia. We will be collecting information about the injuries and also about the battery operated products associated with the injuries. If we have information about the type of product, how the child accessed the product and battery, and how the product or battery came into the home, we will be able to argue for better product/packaging design, labelling and marketing, and to support public health awareness campaigns and educational resources.

It is often difficult to recognise when your child has swallowed or inserted a disk battery

Parents or carers may not see when their child swallows or inserts a battery and once that has happened it is difficult to recognise because similar symptoms may be associated with other common childhood illnesses. The child **might** have increasing cough, drooling, vomiting, refusal to feed, bleeding from the gut (red or black vomit or bowel motions), discharge from the eye, ear or nose, fever. In young children who are not talking yet, it is even more difficult to determine whether

a battery might be involved. There have been cases where very young children who are not yet crawling or walking have been “fed” a battery by older siblings.

What can I do to prevent button battery related injuries?

- Keep products with button batteries out of sight and out of reach of small children.
- Examine devices and make sure a young child cannot gain access to the batteries inside.
- Dispose of used button batteries immediately. Flat batteries can still be dangerous.
- If you suspect a child has swallowed a button battery, do not let the child eat or drink and do not induce vomiting.
- Call the **Poisons Information Hotline on 13 11 26** for additional treatment information.
- Tell others about the risk associated with button batteries and how to keep their children safe.

Where to find more information:

KidSafe Queensland www.kidsafeqld.com.au/news/85-button-batteries-a-hidden-danger

ACCC Product Safety Australia www.productsafety.gov.au/products/electronics-technology/button-batteries