



Button battery guide

What are button batteries?

A button battery (sometimes called coin or lithium batteries) is a small single cell flat battery, shaped like a button. They vary in size, from 0.5cm to 2.5cm in width, and are found in household items such as children's toys, remotes, calculators, musical cards, watches, kitchen scales, even car keys!

Swallowing or inserting any button battery, old or new, can cause life threatening injuries and even death.

Why are they dangerous?

When swallowed, the left over electrical current in a button battery reacts with moisture to produce a strong alkali chemical. The chemical can cause serious internal burns and bleeding. They can also leak chemicals that cause burns - remember, a button battery stuck anywhere (ear/nose etc.) is an emergency. Children often swallow button batteries without anyone knowing. Parents sometimes hear or witness choking as the battery is swallowed.

What are the signs of ingestion?

Children can have no symptoms at all. Suspicion a child has swallowed a button battery is enough to seek urgent medical attention!

Possible symptoms include; Decreased appetite, difficulty eating solids (may still be able to drink), drooling, noisy breathing, coughing, vomiting, regurgitation of food, fever and chest pain (may make a grunting noise), spitting blood, blood-stained saliva, very dark stained/black bowel motions.

What do I do if I know or suspect my child has swallowed a button battery?

My child is in respiratory distress

→ Call 000 - AMBULANCE → Commence DRSABCD

My child is breathing fine but I suspect (or know) they have ingested a button battery

→ Call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 immediately → You will be directed by Poisons staff to the nearest Emergency Department that can manage the injury. Do not try to make your child vomit. Do not let your child eat or drink while awaiting medical advice.

Don't forget to book your baby + child CPR & First Aid class today!

Essential resources



The current advice on administering honey



How to safely dispose of button batteries



Product Safety Australia - Standards, Tips + Recalls



NSW Poisons Button Battery Factsheet