



Office for Product
Safety & Standards



Button batteries Be aware!

We rely on button batteries to power everyday objects like car key fobs, remotes and children's toys. But did you know that if they are swallowed they can badly injure, or even kill a child?

This advice will help you to keep your child safe.

The dangers of button batteries

Button batteries react with saliva to create caustic soda – the chemical often used to unblock drains. If a child swallows a button battery and it gets stuck in their food pipe (oesophagus), it can burn a hole and cause internal bleeding, or even death.

Larger lithium ‘coin cell’ batteries (about the size of a five pence piece) are the most dangerous, but it is best to keep all button batteries out of a child’s reach. Smaller batteries can be inserted into places such as ears and noses, causing serious injuries if undetected.



How to keep children safe

Store spare batteries securely

Store spare button batteries securely and out of children’s reach. Don’t leave them loose in drawers or on surfaces. Watch out when opening multipacks of button batteries in case they fall on the floor.



Know which toys and gadgets use button batteries

These include everyday toys and gadgets, such as: kitchen or bathroom scales, thermometers, gaming headsets, slim remote controls, car key fobs, key finders, flameless nightlights, novelty items like flashing wands or light-up headbands, robot bug or fish toys, fidget spinners with LED lights, calculators, watches and hearing aids.

Under product safety regulations, button battery compartments in toys are required to be secured.



Check your home

If you find things powered by button batteries where the battery compartment isn't secured, move them out of reach of small children. If the item is faulty, get it fixed or get rid of it safely. You can also report faulty toys to your local Trading Standards.



Get rid of 'dead' button batteries immediately

Children often find discarded button batteries lying around or under sofa cushions. 'Dead' button batteries can still have enough power to badly hurt a small child. When you remove one, store it securely and recycle it properly and promptly.



Teach older children the dangers

Tell older children why button batteries are dangerous, and why they shouldn't play with them or give them to young children.



If you suspect your child has swallowed a button battery

Symptoms may not be obvious. Your child might be coughing, gagging or drooling, or pointing to their throat or tummy. Unclear or fluctuating symptoms mean it's important to be vigilant.

If you think your child has swallowed a battery, take them straight to the nearest A&E department or call 999 for an ambulance.

Do:

- take the battery packaging, toy or gadget – if you can – to help staff identify the battery
- trust your instincts and act fast, even if there are no symptoms

Don't:

- let your child eat or drink
- make your child be sick

