



# BUTTON BATTERIES

**Serious injury leading to death can occur in less than 2 hours when young children swallow or insert button batteries.**

An estimated 20 children present to Australian hospitals each week with a button battery related injury. Oesophageal perforation can occur in less than 2 hours with the poorest prognosis associated with oesophageal lodgement and erosion into a major vessel.

Button batteries are found in common household items e.g. watches, toys, novelty items, remote controls, car key remotes, hearing aids, musical greeting cards and thermometers.

Symptoms caused by swallowing or inserting button batteries are often **non-specific** and can **mimic** common conditions when they become lodged in the GI tract, nose or ears.

Extra vigilance is urged in children under 6 years especially pre-verbal toddlers under 3 years.

Potential battery exposure should be considered in patients with:

- **Persistent or atypical croup**  
a lodged battery can cause laryngeal oedema that mimics croup
- **Chest pain**
- **Unexplained food refusal**
- **Unexplained GI bleeding**  
melaena/haematemesis can precede aortic perforation
- **Epistaxis**  
oesophageal bleeding may exit via the nose
- **Regurgitation or drooling**
- **Vomiting without fever or diarrhoea**  
child may still vomit with battery lodged in oesophagus
- **Fever**  
a late sign that may indicate oesophageal perforation
- **Unexplained nasal/ear or vaginal/rectal bleeding or discharge** caused by an insertion

## URGENT ACTION IS NEEDED

If you suspect a button battery ingestion or insertion immediately **call the Poisons Information Centre** on **13 11 26** for fast expert advice.

In an emergency situation, call 000 for an Ambulance.

### REMEMBER:

POOR OUTCOMES ARE ASSOCIATED WITH DELAYED DIAGNOSIS – X-rays looking for button batteries must be **processed urgently.**