

Ministry of Solidarity and Health

**Ministry of the Economy and
Finance**

Directorate General for Health

Directorate General for Competition,
Consumer Affairs and Fraud Control

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Press release

Button batteries: prevent their ingestion by young children and adopt the right reflexes in the event of an accident

In view of the numerous cases of very young children (usually under the age of 6) ingesting button batteries, with serious and sometimes fatal consequences, the health authorities are once again alerting parents, carers and health professionals to this little-known health risk and making them aware of the immediate steps to take in the event of an accident.

Button batteries (**small round flat batteries**) are contained in many everyday objects, such as remote controls for audio-visual and home automation equipment, calculators, watches, cameras, hearing aids, electric toys, etc.

It is important to be especially vigilant now, during the holiday season.

A swallowed battery can very quickly cause life-threatening injuries. In the event of ingestion, EVEN WHEN ONLY SUSPECTED, do not delay, every minute counts!

1/ IMMEDIATELY call a [Poison Control Centre](#) or the emergency services (dial 15 in France) and they will tell you what action to take.

2/ Take your child to the emergency unit indicated by the Poison Control Centre, which will inform it of the protocol to follow.

It is essential for anyone supervising young children to adopt the right reflexes, in order to prevent risks and take **immediate** action in the event of ingestion of button batteries, even when this is only suspected.

To avoid any risk of ingestion, it is important to take the following precautions:

- keep all button batteries, whether used or still in their packaging, out of the reach of children;
- make sure that the battery compartment of all items containing button batteries is secure and cannot be easily opened. If this is not the case, keep the item containing the button batteries out of the reach of children;
- try and purchase appliances whose battery compartments are secure (for example fastened with a screw or fitted with a blocking mechanism requiring manipulation to open it).

Accidents are regularly reported

The French poison control centres frequently report accidents related to the ingestion of these button batteries, which can lead to serious and sometimes fatal medical complications including oesophageal burns and perforation, sudden and unpredictable haemorrhaging, and perforation of the respiratory tract.

The poison control centres used their data to conduct a retrospective study, published in 2017. Between January 1999 and June 2015, 4030 cases were studied, all ages combined. Two children died and 21 serious cases were observed. This study highlighted a significant increase in cases of ingestion with clinical signs, from 7% of cases in 1999 to 18% in 2015. This is probably due to the increase in the number of cases of larger batteries being ingested. A prospective study carried out over two years between June 2016 and June 2018 is currently being analysed, but three child deaths have already occurred during this period.

The authorities are taking action to improve child safety

The Directorate General for Health (DGS), the Directorate General for Competition, Consumer Affairs and Fraud Control (DGCCRF) and the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES) are currently taking a number of measures to improve child safety:

- **Raising awareness and providing information to health professionals, early childhood professionals and parents** on the products likely to contain button batteries and the emergency steps to take in the event of ingestion.
- Actions targeting professionals and manufacturers involved in marketing batteries or products containing button batteries (mass distribution sector, industry, consumer associations), in order to work together to identify ways to strengthen prevention.
- **Raising awareness in other EU Member States** within the framework of the European consumer safety network.
- **DGCCRF checks on button battery packaging and continued DGCCRF checks on toy safety, especially regarding battery accessibility.**

Find out more: <https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/prevention-des-risques-lies-a-l-ingestion-de-piles-bouton>

Graphics: https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/infographie_piles_bouton.pdf

Find the number of your poison control centre here: <http://www.centres-antipoison.net/>

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