

Introduction

Button batteries are small, round and silver and look like coins to small children. They pose a choking risk to children and can easily be placed in mouths and accidentally swallowed or pushed into ears or noses. If a child swallows (put up their nose) a button battery (used or unused); it will burn through soft tissue **in just two hours causing horrendous internal injuries and may cause death.** In Australia, approximately twenty children per week present to hospital after a button battery exposure, with approximately one child every 3 weeks sustaining a severe injury, requiring surgery to remove the battery or repair damage.



If you suspect a child has swallowed or inserted a button battery, immediately telephone the Poisons Information Helpline - 13 11 26 and follow their instructions. If the child is having difficulties breathing, call Triple 0 (000) and follow their instructions. Do not let the child eat or drink. Do not induce vomiting.

Button batteries are used in many products including remote controls, watches, computers, cameras, calculators, torches, flameless candles, fitness devices, digital kitchen and bathroom scales, musical greeting cards and home medical devices.

Many children's toys and equipment are powered by button batteries such as plush toys, toy cars, digital pets, early learning watches, light-up yo-yos, games, and novelty items such as light-up children's clothing and shoes.

Children can access button batteries in a variety of ways, including:

- battery compartments that are not secure
- battery packaging that is not child resistant
- poor quality products which release button batteries when dropped or broken
- spare batteries being provided loose in product packaging
- spare batteries not being kept out of reach around the home
- used batteries not being properly disposed of.

Be Button Battery Aware

C&K employees, affiliated teachers/educators and committee members are required to be button battery aware and implement the following seven actions:

1. Reduce the number of products powered by button batteries

- Implement a strict ban on category one items (page 2 of this procedure).
- Do not purchase products powered by button batteries.
- Restrict children and families bringing item containing button batteries (except for required medical aids) into your centre. Ask families to help children check their bags and remove items that contain button batteries.
- Know which products have button batteries
- Label category two items with *"Keep out of reach of children."*
- Keep a centre register (via [Chemical Register](#)) of products powered by button batteries.
- Complete a thorough monthly centre check for unregistered button batteries via the [Daily Safety Checklist](#).

2. Dispose of spent (flat) and unused batteries

- Immediately remove spent/unused batteries from your centre by covering them in sticky tape and placing them in a tied plastic bag/container stored out of the reach of children. Dispose at local [recycling](#) collection location ASAP. [Local council](#) websites often list additional disposal points.

3. Secure button batteries and products they power

- Battery compartments must meet the safety criteria.
- For category 2 and 3 items, only purchase Duracell button batteries (with a [Bitrex](#) coating) with child-resistant packaging. Please note: purchasing batteries with Bitrex is a risk mitigating measure however may not prevent a child from swallowing a battery. Not all children are able to taste Bitrex.
- Store category two items in a locked storeroom, cupboard, drawer or filing cabinet when not in use.
- Store spare batteries within their original packaging, in a locked storeroom cupboard, drawer or filing cabinet, out of reach of children.

4. Teach children, families and colleagues about the dangers of button batteries

- Incorporate button battery safety concepts into the curriculum. Teach children not to touch/handle button batteries and to alert an adult (e.g., parent, relative or teacher/ educator) when they see one.

- Outline the danger of button batteries with families. Provide information e.g. [Kidsafe Button Battery Brochure](#) and [QLD Health](#).
- Outline C&K button battery restrictions with families upon and regularly throughout enrolment. Display [Button Battery Poster](#) in a prominent location(s) during Term/Quarter 1 and prior to end of year celebrations.
- Outline the danger of button batteries and the requirements of this procedure in the *C&K Family* and *Employee Handbooks* and the [C&K Website/policies](#).

5. Recognise the signs and symptoms of button battery ingestion

If a child states they swallowed something, treat it seriously.

- gagging or choking - stops once battery is swallowed
- drooling
- chest pain (may present as grunting)
- coughing or noisy breathing
- unexplained vomiting or food refusal
- bleeding from gut—black/red vomit/bowel motions
- nose bleeds - sometimes this can present as blood vomited through the nose
- unexplained fever
- abdominal pain
- general discomfort
- spitting blood or blood-stained saliva
- bloody discharge from ear, nose or vagina

6. Respond immediately if you suspect a child has swallowed or inserted a button battery

- Prompt action is critical. Do not wait for symptoms to develop.
- If there is breathing difficulty or bleeding immediately call 000.
- Otherwise, telephone the Poisons Information Centre (13 11 26) for fast expert advice to be directed to the nearest hospital or emergency service that can manage the injury.
- Do not let child eat or drink.
- Do not induce vomiting.

Button Battery Restrictions

C&K employees, affiliated teachers/educators and committee members will implement the following restrictions.

| Category 1 - Items powered by button batteries | Restriction |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children's toys, learning equipment/resources • craft materials • flameless candles • tracking tiles/tags • torches • decorations e.g. fairy lights, Christmas ornaments • calculators • cameras • thermometers including food thermometers • timers • digital scales • clocks • children's watches • novelty items e.g. flashing books, jewellery, hair clips/bands, clothing, shoes, bags, greeting cards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not permitted to enter centre • Cannot be used under any circumstances • Immediately remove from centre • No exceptions |

| Category 2 - Items powered by button batteries | Restriction |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • car keys • glucometers • remote controls for whiteboards, TV, air-conditioners, fans, blinds, security gates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must remain inaccessible to children at all times |

| Required risk mitigation strategies |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battery compartment must meet safety criteria (page 3 of this procedure) • Store in a locked storeroom, cupboard, drawer or filing cabinet when not in use • Keep a record of items powered by button batteries and location of spare button batteries via <i>Chemical Register</i> • Label item - "Keep out of reach of children" • Complete and implement Button Battery Risk Assessment. |

| Category 3 - Items powered by button batteries | Restriction |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • medical devices e.g., hearing aids, insulin pumps, blood glucose monitors • watches (adult only) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be worn by person at all times |

| Required risk mitigation strategies |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battery compartment must meet safety criteria (page 3 of this procedure) • Keep a record of items powered by button batteries and location of spare button batteries via <i>Chemical Register</i> • Complete and implement Button Battery Risk Assessment. |

Button Battery Compartment Safety Criteria

All items in categories 2 and 3 must meet the following battery compartment safety criteria. If item does not meet these criteria, it cannot be used and must be immediately removed from the centre. The item must:

Either:

- require a screwdriver or tool to open the battery compartment
- are secured with a child-resistant locking mechanism

OR:

- require two independent and simultaneous movements to access the batteries. Note, sequential actions like unscrewing a cap does not meet this requirement.

Key references and acknowledgements

C&K consulted with Kidsafe Qld in the development of this procedure.

- Kidsafe QLD - [Button Batteries](#)
- Product Safety Australia (ACCC) - [Button and coin batteries](#)
- Product Safety Australia (ACCC) - [ACCC welcomes safety and information standards for button batteries](#)
- The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne - [Safety: Button batteries](#)
- Queensland Government - [Button Batteries](#)