**Button Batteries: Much More Than Just a Choking Hazard**

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OKLAHOMA CITY – Button batteries – found in devices throughout the home as well as in many children’s toys – may cause a choking hazard or other life-threatening issues for small children, warn specialists at the Oklahoma Center for Poison and Drug Information.

Last year, specialists at the center noted a nearly 20 percent increase in the number of cases where a child swallowed one of these small, disc-shaped batteries. Though sometimes they can be swallowed without causing a problem, other times the battery may end up becoming stuck in the throat. This can happen even if the child shows no signs such as coughing or choking. Once stuck, the battery must be removed by a doctor immediately in order to avoid serious burns or other life-threatening situations. Similar serious problems can occur if the child places a button battery in the nose or ear.

With Thanksgiving gatherings and Black Friday shopping right around the corner, parents and caregivers should keep an eye out for the small, yet dangerous product.

Some helpful tips for a safe Holiday weekend:

* When having company over, make sure items containing button batteries are put away and in a safe place where children cannot reach.
* Be aware of the products you are buying when shopping for small children.
* Never leave batteries sitting out.
* Do not replace or change batteries in front of children.
* Check household items that contain button batteries to ensure the battery compartment is securely shut.
* Buy only products that require a screwdriver or tool to open the battery compartment.
* Check all household items such as garage door openers, bathroom scales, flameless candles, handheld video games, flashlights, etc., that could cause a potential hazard.
* Batteries the size of a penny or larger can cause an even greater danger.

Call the poison center with any questions or concerns regarding button batteries and seek immediate help if a battery is accidently swallowed because there is no way of telling whether the battery will pass or get stuck inside the child’s body. Also, do not forget to text “POISON” to 797979 to easily have the Oklahoma poison center’s number saved in your cell phone.

Pharmacists and registered nurses at the poison center are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at (800) 222-1222. Please do not email the poison center or a member of the poison center staff, as poisoning emergencies are not handled through email. The Oklahoma Center for Poison and Drug Information is a program of the University of Oklahoma College of Pharmacy at the OU Health Sciences Center. For more information, visit OklahomaPoison.org.

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