Your child and button batteries

Button batteries are the small round batteries found in lots of toys and everyday objects. They can be extremely dangerous for children if swallowed and can kill within a matter of hours.
Why are they so dangerous?
Button batteries aren’t just a choking risk. In many cases, it may not even be obvious that your child has swallowed one. They may be breathing normally, or simply develop cold or flu-like symptoms. But, if a button battery gets stuck in the throat or gullet this can trigger the electrical charge and create caustic soda [the chemical used to unblock drains]. This can burn a hole through the throat and can lead to serious internal bleeding and death. The reaction can happen in as little as two hours.

Button batteries are also very dangerous if they get stuck in a child’s nose or ear.

What products use button batteries?
Button batteries can be found in many toys, gadgets and other objects you’ll find around the house, including:
• watches
• key fobs
• calculators
• hearing aids
• children’s toys
• small remote controls
• musical greeting cards
• children’s thermometers
• flameless candles and nightlights.

Who is at risk?
Children under 6 are most at risk. But older children can be fascinated by button batteries and the objects that contain them too.

How can I keep children safe?
• Keep products with button batteries well out of reach if the battery compartment isn’t secure with a screw.
• Store spare button batteries out of children’s reach and sight, ideally in a high-up, lockable cupboard.
• Avoid toys from markets or temporary shops as they may not conform to safety regulations.
• Teach older children that button batteries are dangerous and not to play with them or give them to younger brothers or sisters.

What else do I need to be aware of?
If you suspect your child has swallowed a button battery, the most important thing is to act fast:
• Take them straight to the A&E department at your local hospital or dial 999 for an ambulance.
• Tell the doctor there that you think your child has swallowed a button battery.
• Do not let your child eat or drink.
• Do not make them sick.
• Do not wait to see if symptoms develop.