Association of British Paediatric Nurses
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Committed to promoting the development of children's nursing through evidence based information about practice and education

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International Button Battery Awareness Day 12th June 2026

This day highlights the importance and significance of button battery ingestion (BBI), and the Association of British Paediatric Nurses (ABPN) is proud to stand alongside the European Society for Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition to call for greater awareness, recognition and prevention of button battery ingestion in children and young people.

In the last two decades, there has been a 7-fold increase in the risk of severe injury due to BBI with most BBIs occurring at a peak in 1-year olds[1]. BBIs is one of the most harmful of foreign body ingestions in children and can lead to devastating severe injuries and even death[1].

Early recognition is crucial for effective treatment to commence but far too few people are aware of the severe consequences. Such that, by the time the parent, primary caregiver is aware, damage to the oesophagus and aorta are already taking place. The acid in the batteries, when mixed with saliva, creates a highly caustic soda which is a strong alkali, and burns through tissue[2] in as little as 2 hours. The batteries themselves do not need to be leaking, and even batteries which no longer work have the potential to cause significant damage. Children and Young People's Nurses are primly placed to support families and care givers in preventative measures and promote good practice by supporting awareness and promotion of good practices.

If BBI is suspected or witnessed it is vital that medical attention at Emergency Department is sought immediately. The child MUST NOT be allowed to eat or drink and DO NOT induce vomiting.

Children's nurses play a vital role in improving outcomes by:

- Recognising and acting on early symptoms such as: drooling, swallowing difficulty or pain on swallowing, coughing, and shortness of breath or breathing difficulties.
- Share information and helping nurseries, play groups and schools to be aware of toys with small battery compartments, and promote safe storage and supervision.
- When a battery no longer works, it should be disposed of straight away and not be placed in the household bin.

The ABPN believes that

- Safe battery storage and disposal are the simplest ways to reduce the risk of BBIs.

- Keep button batteries out of reach from children and dispose of them immediately once they are not working.
- Early recognition and timely management are critical to prevent further deterioration.

“Having looked after 3 extremely unwell children in PICU who had ingested a button battery, I can attest to the significant impact to the child and their family. In each case, it was a situation that would be familiar to many: a tin on the side with all sorts of household items in it that, on this occasion, the child could reach. Sadly, in each situation, the adult supervising was not aware of the consequences of the little battery; yet, the damage was significant. The prompt action of the caregivers in each situation was crucial for the outcome of the children who all made, an eventual recovery.”

Ellie Forbes – ABPN Honorary Secretary, Member and Children’s Nurse

[1] Mubarak, A. et al. (2021). Diagnosis, Management, and Prevention of Button Battery Ingestion in Childhood: A European Society for Paediatric Gastroenterology Hepatology and Nutrition Position Paper**.** Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition 73 (1), 129 – 136. DOI: 10.1097/MPG.0000000000003048

[2] Great Ormond Street Hospital (2018) Button Batteries – using them safely Button batteries – using them safely | Great Ormond Street Hospital

Notes for editors

The term child refers to infants, children, young people and young adults up to 25 years of age

The ABPN recognises that primary and community services, as well as child public health and mental health services, including school nurses and health visitors also have a key role in supporting children, young people and families.

The ABPN is the oldest children’s nursing association in the world, established in 1938. Our wide membership includes experts in clinical practice, education, leadership and research.

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