

Button battery safety advice from the Audiology department: information for families

Coin or button batteries are often used in hearing devices, such as hearing aids and cochlear implants. Due to their size – and children’s tendency to explore by putting things in their mouth, nose or ears – they can be dangerous. The Audiology department at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) advises taking safety precautions as follows to keep your child safe.

Disposable button batteries that are found in hearing devices are called ‘zinc-air’ button batteries and look like this:



Button batteries are also found in a range of household devices, including some children’s toys, and may differ from the batteries shown above.

If you are concerned that your child may have swallowed a battery

- 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.
- If you have the battery packaging or the product powered by the battery, take it with

you. This will help the doctor identify the type of battery and make treatment easier.

- Do not let your child eat or drink.
- Do not make them sick.

Trust your instincts and act fast – do not wait to see if any symptoms develop.

Hearing aids and bone conduction devices

All children under five years old and older children with additional difficulties should use hearing aids with secure (tamper resistant) battery compartments. These should also be considered for older children living with others who fall into these groups.

Your Audiologist will show you how to use the tamper resistant battery compartment. If your child uses a hearing aid that does not currently have a secure battery compartment, please contact the Audiology Team on 020 7813 8315, audiology.info@gosh.nhs.uk

Cochlear implant speech processors

In most cases, we recommend using the **rechargeable battery** option that is provided with



your speech processor. These are safer and provide a more stable power output.

There are some types of speech processor that do not have a rechargeable battery option so the only option is to use **disposable batteries**. There are also some occasions when using disposable batteries is a more convenient and practical option.

In these circumstances, it is recommended that you always use the lockable battery compartment option, which your Audiologist will show you how to use. If you require further information please contact the Cochlear Implant Team on 020 7829 7938, cochlear@gosh.nhs.uk.

Battery safety at home

There are steps you can take to reduce the risk to your child and other children. The following information applies to hearing devices, and any other items in your home that may contain button batteries:

- Ensure that your child's tamper resistant battery compartment is securely closed before putting on their hearing devices
- Keep your child's hearing devices well out of reach when the battery compartment is not secured (that is, when they are turned off).
- Be aware of which devices at home have button batteries and make sure the battery compartment is locked closed.
- Keep all spare batteries in a sealed container in a high cupboard.
- Put 'flat' or 'dead' batteries out of children's reach straight away and recycle them safely as quickly as possible. Hearing aid batteries can be returned to our department for recycling.
- Teach older children that button batteries are dangerous and not to play with them or give them to younger brothers and sisters.

Further information and support

Contact the Audiology or Cochlear Implant team to discuss your child's device and batteries.

See our general information sheet on button battery safety at <https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/conditions-and-treatments/conditions-we-treat/button-batteries-using-them-safely>

Safety advice on button batteries (and other dangers in the home) is available from the Child Accident Prevention Trust at www.capt.org.uk/button-batteries

The European Portable Battery Association (www.epbaeurope.net/) also provides information at buttonbatteryingestion.com/en/

