

The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System — Serving New Jersey Since 1983

## NEWS RELEASE

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Media to contact:  
800-222-1222  
800-962-1253 if outside NJ

For Immediate Release  
April 27, 2021

### Danger Hiding in Plain Sight

#### Button Batteries and High-Powered Magnets Are Extremely Dangerous

**(New Jersey, NJ)** – Some common household items may be small, but they pose a sizable injury risk for crawling infants and young children. Seemingly harmless items like watches, toys, electronics, key fobs, hearing aids, and singing greeting cards contain “bite-sized” batteries that can cause serious, even deadly injuries if swallowed or placed in the nose or ear. Like many other small items, these batteries, also called button or coin batteries, are a choking hazard.

“Most parents and caregivers are unaware that the toys and everyday items their young children come in contact with, contain these potentially dangerous coin-shaped batteries,” says Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Department of Emergency Medicine](#). “It does not take very long for a battery to begin to cause serious injury once it gets stuck inside the body; internal chemical burns can result quickly, producing serious, even permanent damage to the esophagus and other internal organs.”

So far this year, the New Jersey Poison Control Center has referred 11 children to hospital emergency departments for swallowing button batteries. Along with disc batteries, high-powered magnet toys also pose serious risk. These magnets may also cause devastating, internal damage if swallowed. To date, the state’s poison control center has consulted on 24 cases where children were exposed to these powerful magnets.

“Not only are magnets a choking hazard, but if two or more magnets are swallowed together, they can attract one another inside the body, causing a blockage or twist in the intestines. A single magnet may pass through just fine, but two or more is asking for serious trouble,” says Calello. It is important to take notice of home products that are missing these small batteries or magnets. This could be the first indication that a young child or pet has swallowed such items.

Pets are curious just like young children. It’s easy for them to swallow a button battery or magnet from an item left around the home. Pets can suffer the same serious, even fatal health consequences. s. If you think your pet has swallowed a battery or magnet, call your veterinarian or local animal hospital immediately. Ingesting these items is a medical emergency.

“Whether you see your child swallow any of these items or suspect he or she did; immediate medical attention is required,” says Calello. “Do not wait for symptoms to develop – irreversible damage may have

occurred by the time signs appear. This was the case a few years ago in New Jersey when a young child died after ingesting a button battery.”

It’s far easier to prevent a tragedy than to treat one. Check the battery compartments of common household items; if the compartments are not secured by screws, prevent your child or pet from having access to those products. The same goes for products with high-powered magnets. “Assuming “dead” batteries cannot cause harm puts our children and pets at risk for these potentially life-threatening exposures. Dead batteries still have enough charge to burn through tissue, causing considerable damage when swallowed,” says Calello.

For further information, read Dr. Calello’s interview with [WebMD](#).

Exposure to coin-sized batteries or high-powdered magnets is a medical emergency. Call your local poison control center right away for treatment advice at 1-800-222-1222. Poison control centers are staffed by healthcare professionals 24/7. If someone is unconscious, not breathing, hard to wake up, or having a seizure, immediately call 9-1-1.

New Jersey residents can contact the NJ Poison Control Center: Call 1-800-222-1222; Text 973-339-0702; Chat via [website](#). Stay connected on social: [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#).

**Help is Just a Phone Call Away!**

**Real People. Real Answers.**

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**Available for Media Interviews**

Diane P. Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School’s Department of Emergency Medicine

Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Managing Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School’s Department of Emergency Medicine

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**About New Jersey Poison Control Center / NJPIES, 1-800-222-1222**

Chartered in 1983, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES), known to the public as the New Jersey Poison Control Center, is the state’s primary defense against injury and deaths from intentional and unintentional poisonings. It is designated as the state’s regional poison control center by the New Jersey Department of Health and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It is a division of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located at Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences in Newark. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health, NJ Hospitals and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Hotline staff (physicians, registered nurses, and pharmacists) provide free, telemedicine consultation through hotline services (telephone, text, chat) regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention practices, drug interactions and overdoses, food poisoning, environmental chemical exposures, animal/insect bites and stings, plant and other outdoor exposures, carbon monoxide and lead poisonings, and more. NJPIES’ services are free, confidential/private, available 24/7, and help is available in any language. Call 1-800-222-1222; Text 973-339-0702; [Chat](#). Stay Connected: [FB](#) / [Twitter](#) / [Website](#)

**About Rutgers New Jersey Medical School**

Founded in 1954, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School is the oldest school of medicine in the state. Today it is part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and graduates approximately 170 physicians a year. In addition to providing the MD degree, the

school offers MD/PhD, MD/MPH and MD/MBA degrees through collaborations with other institutions of higher education. Dedicated to excellence in education, research, clinical care and community outreach, the medical school comprises 20 academic departments and works with several healthcare partners, including its principal teaching hospital, University Hospital. Its faculty consists of numerous world-renowned scientists and many of the region's "top doctors." Home to the nation's oldest student-run clinic, New Jersey Medical School hosts more than 50 centers and institutes, including the Public Health Research Institute Center, the Global Tuberculosis Institute and the Neurological Institute of New Jersey. For more information please visit: [njms.rutgers.edu](http://njms.rutgers.edu).

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