

Media statement

22 February 2019

Button battery safety on Summer's Day

Summer's Day (28 February 2019) is a timely reminder about the dangers of button batteries.

Held annually on the last day of summer, Summer's Day is named after a little girl, Summer, who lost her life after swallowing a button battery in 2015. It's a time to remember all children who have suffered permanent impairment or death through unintentional injuries.

Dr Daniel Bitmead, Clinical Director Nambour General Hospital's Emergency Department, said hundreds of children across the country ended up in hospital emergency departments last year after swallowing button batteries.

"In 2018, across Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service, we had a total of 20 presentations for suspected button battery ingestion," Dr Bitmead said.

"Button batteries can be found in remote controls, singing greeting cards, watches, toys, calculators and other electronics. Often, they are not visible to parents as they are already integrated into various devices.

"Children under the age of five are at the highest level of risk. Kids are inquisitive and babies and toddlers tend to put things in their mouths," he said.

Dr Bitmead has urged parents to ensure used batteries are placed out of reach of children, and any loose or spare replacement batteries are kept locked away. Also, replace items that do not have a screw-down battery compartment."

Dr Bitmead said: "When button batteries are swallowed, some can get lodged, react with saliva and cause internal burns, severe bleeding or even death."

The warning signs a child has swallowed one of the batteries are hard to detect, so if you suspect a child has swallowed a button battery, call 000 or go to your nearest hospital emergency department immediately.

ENDS

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