

BUTTON BATTERIES—A HIDDEN DANGER IN EVERY HOME

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Background Small, powerful disc shaped batteries are used across a wide variety of consumer products. Over the last two decades or so, the range of applications has grown exponentially. It is only comparatively recently however that there has been an awareness of the potentially serious harms that can arise from accidental ingestion and inhalation. Infants and children are proving to be the most susceptible to harm. The widespread use of button batteries makes this a global challenge.

Aims/Objectives/Purpose The diverse range of products that depend on button batteries would suggest a simple ban is not feasible and reliance on a solely regulatory 'fix' is unlikely to fully mitigate the risks. This paper identifies the various elements that will be needed as part of an overall, effective response. It provides an introduction as a lead into further dialogue around how complex global product safety issues such as this need to be addressed.

Results/Outcome Product safety regulators, medical practitioners, child welfare agencies and the battery industry are all responding to the challenges that this issue poses. The hazards and issues posed by button batteries will require a multi-faceted response which should involve a collaborative approach from a variety of agencies. The key to a successful outcome will be an approach that takes into account the product in terms of design, construction, labelling and packaging coupled with advice and guidance to suppliers, end users and the medical fraternity who may encounter battery related incidents.