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COIN-SIZED LITHIUM BATTERIES POSE AN EMERGING GLOBAL BURN RISK TO CHILDREN

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Background About 3500 button battery swallowing cases are reported to poison control centres in the USA each year and are an emerging risk worldwide. The most serious cases involve nickel-sized 20 mm lithium batteries which are found in remotes, key fobs, greeting cards, children's books, scales, and other common household items. These batteries can get stuck in the child's throat and burn through the oesophagus in as little as 2 hours. Repairing the damage is painful and can require feeding tubes, breathing tubes and multiple surgeries. In some cases, children have died.

Purpose The aim of this study is to measure parental awareness of the danger associated with button batteries and describe prevention campaigns underway in four countries.

Methods A total of 557 USA parents of children ages six and under were interviewed online during February/March 2012.

Results More than two-thirds of parents surveyed (68%) feel that button batteries pose a high level of danger. After learning about this issue, parents say they are highly likely to keep devices with button batteries out of reach of children (82%) secure devices with

battery compartments (79%) and encourage other parents to do the same (66%).

Conclusions As coin-sized lithium batteries became more widely used in household products, Safe Kids Worldwide member countries have partnered on a campaign called The Battery Controlled to raise awareness and change behaviour among adult caregivers about this little-known and emerging risk to small children.