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Press release

Risks of ingestion of button batteries by young children: adopt the right reflexes in the event of an accident

Several cases of poisoning in young children (including one that was serious) resulting from the ingestion of button batteries from luminous fidget spinners have been reported by the French poison control centres. These cases illustrate the importance for parents to prevent accidents by avoiding products presenting a risk and adopting the right reflexes in the event of ingestion of button batteries, even when only suspected. The Directorate General for Competition, Consumer Affairs and Fraud Control (DGCCRF), the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES) and the French poison control centres wish to reiterate the advice to follow.

Ingestion of a button battery represents a serious hazard for children

Many products, such as toys or remote controls, may contain small batteries (known as button batteries or button cells). These batteries represent a serious hazard for children when ingested, even when there is no respiratory obstruction. After it is swallowed, a battery may release toxic substances into the oesophagus, resulting in the formation of potentially fatal lesions within a few hours.

Each year in France, more than 1200 visits to hospital emergency departments are linked to the ingestion of button batteries. The poison control centres have identified 341 cases of ingestion or inhalation of button batteries between June 2016 and today. Accidents due to button batteries as foreign bodies predominantly affect children aged 0-5 years. These mainly involve ingestion (in nine cases out of ten). It should be noted that the two most recent incidents concerned children aged 6 and 10 years who put luminous fidget spinners (hand-held spinning toys) in their mouths, and the batteries came out of their compartments.

To prevent accidents, check the safety of toys... and more importantly that of everyday objects

Because they are intended for younger age groups, [toys are subject to strict requirements](#). In particular, European legislation stipulates that their batteries must not be accessible. It should therefore not be possible for a child to open the compartment where they are housed, nor should it open or break if the toy is dropped. As the French consumer protection authority, the DGCCRF ensures the safety of toys placed on the market with laboratory tests and analyses, especially in the run-up to Christmas. In 2016-17, 107 electrical toys were tested in this way: in five toys the batteries were found to be accessible; these included three luminous fidget spinners, which were withdrawn from the market.

Nevertheless, although the monitoring carried out by the DGCCRF indicates that these regulations are generally complied with, luminous fidget spinners, which have been imported in massive quantities and at low cost since the beginning of 2017, seem more likely to present a risk. In 2017, a dozen alerts were reported at European level concerning certain luminous models of fidget spinner, due to a risk of ingestion of the batteries. In France, the laboratories of the DGCCRF identified a non-conformity with this requirement in three of the five models of luminous fidget spinners tested.

Parents are therefore invited to check that the batteries of the luminous fidget spinners handled by their children are not easily accessible. They should also remain vigilant about the other everyday objects containing button batteries (remote controls, car keys) which, because they are not intended for children, are not subject to these strict regulatory obligations and are regularly the cause of accidents.

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To avoid any risk, we recommend that you observe the following precautions:

- always keep button batteries out of the reach of children;
- check that the battery compartment is properly secure and cannot be opened, and if this is not the case, keep the object containing them out of the reach of children;
- try and purchase appliances whose battery compartments are secure (fastened with a screw or needing two independent manoeuvres to open them);
- in the event of ingestion of a button battery, even when only suspected, call the emergency services (dial 15 in France) or a poison control centre, and explicitly tell the operator that a child may have ingested a button battery.