Dangers of Lithium Batteries

A doctor at Royal Manchester Children’s Hospital is calling for parents to be aware of the dangers of button batteries which may be fatal to their children.

Lithium button batteries that are used to power toys, key fobs, remote controls, birthday cards etc. can cause severe life changing injury or death in young children.

Dr Kate Parkins, Consultant in Paediatric Intensive Care says: “There have already been two reported deaths in the Greater Manchester area directly linked to children swallowing these batteries so it’s important parents are aware of the serious harm they can cause.

Children under six years old are most at risk, but severe injury can happen in any age group.

Most serious cases are associated with Lithium button batteries larger than 20 mm (the size of a 10p piece). These can get stuck in the throat or gullet (oesophagus) and this is where the battery can cause the most harm in as little as two hours.”

“Repair can require feeding and breathing tubes and multiple operations. Parents need to be aware there may be no symptoms at first or that symptoms may be similar to other illnesses (eg coughing, drooling, not eating or drinking normally, tummy pain). Children can usually breathe with the battery in their throat so it may be difficult to spot.”

**Parental Advice:**

1. Keep devices with button batteries out of reach if the battery compartments aren’t secure, and lock away any loose batteries.
2. If a child swallows a button battery take them straight to the nearest Accident & Emergency Department. Do not let them eat or drink and do not try to make them sick.
3. If a child gets a button battery stuck in the nose or ear take them to the nearest Accident & Emergency Department as soon as possible. It is important that it is removed quickly as the battery can cause permanent damage.

Lithium batteries are found in general household items such as toys, keys, hearing aids and smartphones!

**Special points of interest:**

- Even batteries that no longer work can cause serious injury.
- When the battery gets stuck it causes injury by setting up an electrical current when in contact with lining of the throat. This causes a build-up of caustic soda and can cause a severe burn.
- The most harm can occur in 2 hours — take them to A&E ASAP!!

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270 babies in the UK die unexpectedly before their 1st birthday every year...
(The lullaby Trust, August 2014)
From the 2013/14 reporting year 27 deaths of infants under 1 year had modifiable factors. In 70% of these deaths smoking in the household by a parent/carer was deemed to be a risk factor.

Joanna McCullagh (Lancashire Public Health Specialist - Tobacco Control) explains "Quitting smoking is one of the most positive and rewarding achievements a mum to be can do when pregnant or after delivery to give their baby the best start in life. We know that this can be hard but there is lots of support to help pregnant women. It's a great idea for lots of reasons not least because continuing to smoke increases the risk of miscarriage, premature birth or stillbirth. This is because every cigarette smoked reduces the oxygen flow to the baby for 15 minutes, which means that their tiny heart has to beat harder. This may result in the baby being born small, underdeveloped and sickly.

It's never too late for quitting to make a difference as the baby will feel the benefits instantly. The smoker will also save lots of cash to treat themselves and bump - It is estimated that a smoker of 20 a day, will save £55 a week and £2,800 a year.

We know that stopping smoking isn’t easy but help is available. With support from a local stop smoking service pregnant women are four times more likely to quit than going it alone.

They can get help with one to one support and advice about stop smoking medicines that can be used during pregnancy to help beat the cravings. These are available on prescription and are free to those who are pregnant or who are on benefits."

For help to quit smokers should contact their local service:

0800 328 6297 if you live in East, Central and West Lancashire 01524 845145 for North Lancashire, 01254 587999 for BwD and 01253 951570 for Blackpool.

Smokefree Homes Tobacco smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals, more than 60 of which cause cancer. Breathing other people’s smoke is called second-hand smoking and is harmful to health. The majority of second-hand smoke is invisible and odourless so smokers often don’t realise that they are putting other people at risk.

Babies and children are particularly at risk from second-hand smoke because they are smaller and still developing. Therefore they breathe faster and take in more of the toxic chemicals. Babies and children exposed to second-hand smoke are at increased risk of bronchitis, asthma, ear infections, meningitis and sudden infant death syndrome.

Tobacco smoke spreads quickly from room to room even if a window is open. It sticks to clothes, walls, furniture and carpets. The best way to improve a baby’s health is to quit altogether. However, we know that this is easier said than done so if parents smoke, the most important thing they can do to protect the baby is to smoke outside of the house and car and ask all friends and family to do the same.

There are other benefits to keeping the home smokefree. It will smell fresher and won’t need to be redecorated as often. It also reduces the risk of starting a fire in the home.

Smokers may also find that they smoke fewer cigarettes through making the effort to go outside, which can give them the confidence to quit altogether as well as saving money.

“every cigarette smoked reduces the oxygen flow to the baby for 15 minutes”

There are a number of things that people can do to help keep their home smokefree:

1. Sign up to the Lancashire smokefree homes scheme and receive resources to tell all visitors that they can’t smoke in the house (website on back page).
2. Set up an area for smoking outside with an ashtray and chair and also keep a jacket (just for smoking) and umbrella by the doorway to make it easier to go outside when it’s cold or raining.
3. Store lighters and cigarettes outside the door as long as they are out of reach of children.
4. Team up with another parent who smokes and help watch each other’s children during any smoking breaks.
5. If you live in a flat or can’t go outside, try using Nicotine Replacement Therapy, such as gum or mouth spray to relieve cravings until you are able to go outside.
If you would like any further information about anything on this newsletter please contact Danielle Dawson, CDOP Coordinator using the details below:
Phone: 01772 530329
E-mail: danielle.dawson@lancashire.gov.uk

Address:
Pan-Lancashire CDOP
LSCB Office
503-504, JDO,
East Cliff
Preston
PR1 3JT

Who are we and what do we do?
The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) is a multi agency group responsible for reviewing all child deaths. The Panel is a sub group of the three Local Safeguarding Children Boards in the pan-Lancashire area. The deaths of all live-born children 0-17 (excluding infants live-born following planned, legal terminations of pregnancy), are reviewed by the CDOP in line with statutory guidance.

Since establishment of the CDOP in April 2008, the Panel has reviewed the deaths of 770 children. From these reviews the Panel has identified that in 177 deaths there were one or more factors which may have contributed to the death of the child and which, by means of locally or nationally achievable interventions, could be modified to reduce the risk of future child deaths.

The most common risk factors identified from the pan-Lancashire cases identified to be modifiable are:
- 35% service provision (including access to health care, prior medical intervention e.g. misdiagnosis or missed testing etc, communication e.g. cross boundary issues, interagency communication or internal issues and/or access to other services e.g. housing)
- 31% smoking (includes smoking in pregnancy and in the household by parent or carer)
- 31% alcohol/substance misuse by parent, carer and/or child
- 26% parenting capacity such as supervision, engagement with services, seeking medical help or compliance with medication
- 26% emotional and mental health
- 21% safer sleep issues of which 81% had other risk factors
- 21% Domestic abuse (including low level, historical and verbal)

Links
http://www.rospa.com/childsafety/
http://www.capt.org.uk/
http://www.bubbalicious.co.uk/info/
http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep
http://www.lancashiresmokefreehomes.co.uk/
Pan Lancashire Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Children:
http://panlancashirescb.proceduresonline.com/