



**Problem:** Children die each year from heatstroke, after being left alone in a vehicle.

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#### Keeping them safe

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You live by your daily routine and it helps you get things done. Be extra careful, though, if you have to change any part of that routine. This is more likely to happen when you, your spouse/partner, or caregiver who helps with your children, forgets that a child is in the back seat. This can and does happen when you break a well-established routine.

#### Disasters Happen Quickly

At other times, you are on your way home and realize you need to stop in at the store and pick up one or two things for dinner. So, you leave your child unattended, thinking, "I'll just run into the store for a minute," which is illegal in many States. Even cool temperatures in the 60s can cause the temperature to rise well above 110° Fahrenheit inside your car. The inside temperature can rise almost 20 degrees within the first 10 minutes.

Some children die in hot cars after climbing into an unlocked vehicle without an adult's knowledge. Once in the vehicle, they may become confused by the door opening mechanism or trapped in the trunk, and unable to get out before heatstroke occurs.

#### Prevention Tips

- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle.
- Do not let your children play in an unattended vehicle. Teach them that a vehicle is not a play area.
- Never leave infants or children in a parked vehicle, even if the windows are partially open.
- Make a habit of looking in the vehicle - front and back - before locking the door and walking away.
- If you are dropping your child off at childcare, and normally it's your spouse or partner who drops them off, have your spouse or partner call you to make sure the drop went according to plan.
- Ask your childcare provider to call you if your child does not show up for childcare.
- Always lock vehicle doors and trunks and keep keys out of children's reach. If a child is missing, check the vehicle first, including the trunk.
- If you see a child alone in a hot vehicle, call the police. If they are in distress due to heat, get them out as quickly as possible. Cool the child rapidly. Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately.
- Do things to remind yourself that a child is in the vehicle, such as:
  - Writing yourself a note and putting the note where you will see it when you leave the vehicle;
  - Placing your purse, briefcase or something else you need in the back seat so that you will have to check the back seat when you leave the vehicle; or
  - Keeping an object in the car seat, such as a stuffed toy. When the child is buckled in, place the object where the driver will notice it when he or she is leaving the vehicle.

#### What you need to know, now

- Vehicles heat up quickly - even with a window rolled down two inches, if the outside temperature is in the low 80s° Fahrenheit, the temperature inside a vehicle can reach deadly levels in only 10 minutes.
- Children's bodies overheat easily, and infants and children under four years of age are among those at greatest risk for heat-related illness.
- Children's bodies absorb more heat on a hot day than an adult. Also, children are less able to lower their body heat by sweating. When a body cannot sweat enough, the body temperature rises rapidly.
  - In fact, when left in a hot vehicle, a young child's body temperature may increase three to five times as fast as an adult. High body temperatures can cause permanent injury or even death.

#### Dangers of Extreme Heat

- Symptoms of heatstroke: Warning signs vary but may include: red, hot, and moist or dry skin, no sweating, a strong rapid pulse or a slow weak pulse, a throbbing headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion, being grouchy, or acting strangely.
- If you see a child alone in a hot vehicle, call the police. If they are in distress due to heat, get them out as quickly as possible. Cool the child rapidly. Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately.

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