

The dangers of a hot car and your children

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Every year, between 30 and 50 children in the U.S. die from overheating in a vehicle. Most of those deaths are the result of a parent or caregiver forgetting a child — usually a sleeping baby or toddler — in the car on a warm or hot day. Here are some tips:

Do not Knowingly Leave a Child in the Car

Do not be tempted to let your dozing child continue sleeping in the car after you have arrived at your destination — not even in your own driveway. Even if it is 60 degrees outside, a car can still reach temperatures over 110 degrees inside. Cars can heat up 20 degrees in 10 minutes, and rolling down the windows or parking in the shade does little to keep a car interior cool on a hot day. Even if it is a cloudy day, do not leave your child unattended in the car. Children's body temperatures rise much more quickly than adults, and they can suffer from heatstroke with a body temperature of 104 and die with a temperature of 107 degrees.

Use Reminders and Double-Check

When parents are overly tired, or when they stray from their normal routine, they're more likely to forget a quiet child in the backseat. Create a reminder for yourself that your child is in the backseat. Try these strategies:

- Put an essential item, such as your purse or briefcase, next to your child's car seat rather than in the front seat.
- Place a "baby on board" or "look before you lock" sign or note on your dashboard or front passenger seat when you place your child in the car seat.
- If your family is following a new routine, or someone different (such as your spouse, a grandparent, neighbor, or babysitter) is driving your child to daycare, always check in with the daycare or person who did the drop-off to ensure your child reached the destination.

Take Action if You See a Child at Risk

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) urges you to offer assistance if you see a child alone in a car, and get help right away if you notice signs of heatstroke. "Don't worry about getting involved in someone else's business — protecting children is *everyone's* business," according to the NHTSA. Besides, "Good Samaritan" laws offer legal protection for people trying to help in an emergency. The NHTSA offers these tips if you see a child alone in a vehicle:

- Don't wait more than a few minutes for the driver to return before taking action.
- If the child is in distress or not responsive, call 911 immediately, get the child out of the car, and spray the child with cool water (not an ice bath).
- If the child is responsive, stay with him until help arrives, and have someone else search for the driver or ask the store/facility to page the car owner.