



ACT

AVOID. CREATE REMINDERS. TAKE ACTION.



Never leave your child alone in a car.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is hyperthermia?

A: Hyperthermia, also known as heat stroke, is a condition that occurs when the body isn't able to cool itself quickly enough and the body temperature rises to dangerous levels.

Q: What are symptoms of heat stroke?

A: Symptoms may include dizziness, disorientation, agitation, confusion, sluggishness, seizure, hot, dry skin that is flushed but not sweaty, loss of consciousness, rapid heartbeat or hallucinations.

Q: Who is affected by hyperthermia?

A: Children are at great risk for hyperthermia as a child's body heats up 3 to 5 times faster than an adult's. When the body's temperature reaches 104 degrees, the internal organs start to shut down. When it reaches 107 degrees, the person dies.

Q: Why are we hearing so much about this now?

A: Safe Kids has made its mission to draw attention to this preventable child safety risk. When the sun is out, and even on cloudy days, the inside of a car can become much hotter than the temperature outside. In just 10 minutes a car can heat up 20 degrees. On an 80 degree day, the inside of a closed car can quickly exceed 100 degrees. Cracking a window does little to keep the inside of a car cool.

Q: Why are children at such great risk in cars?

A: When young children are left unattended in cars, there is no one there to be sure the inside temperature is safe for them. As their internal body temperature regulation systems are not fully developed, their bodies heat up 3-5 times faster than adults, and there is little margin for error. Children die as a result of being left unattended in a vehicle in one of three ways: 1) in over half the cases (52%), they are "forgotten" by a distracted caregiver when they arrive at their destination; 2) in about 30% of cases, they climb into an unlocked car or trunk to play and are overcome by heat and can't climb out and 3) in about 17% of cases, they are intentionally left alone by a driver.

Q: How many children die from hyperthermia (heat stroke)?

A: Since 1998, over 500 children across the United States have died from being trapped in a hot car. An average of 38 children die this way every year and for every child who dies, hundreds more are rescued. It does not have to be hot outside for the car to heat up to a dangerous level. Light pouring through the windows of the car stays within the car and raises its temperature. Cracking a window does little or nothing to let heat escape.

Q: How can a driver be sure not to “forget” a child in a back seat?

A: The best way to remember a child is to leave something the adult will need at the next destination in a back seat. This could be their purse, briefcase, gym bag, cell phone or something else they always carry. They can set the alarm on their cell phone or computer calendar as a reminder to drop their child off at childcare.

Q: Are there other dangers to unattended children in cars?

A: Yes, children can put a car in gear, wander away from the car or be kidnapped.

Q: What should people do for their children to avoid heat stroke?

A: The best thing to do is NEVER LEAVE YOUR CHILD ALONE IN A CAR – not even for a minute. Take your child with you when you leave the vehicle. People have been known to run into a store and lose track of time. It takes very little time for a child to be at great risk of death or injury when they are alone in a car. Make sure you make it clear to your babysitter that it is never okay to leave your child alone in a car.

Q: Are there laws about this?

A: Yes, 19 states have laws, but each state law is different. Some states may consider this action to be felony child neglect if a child is injured or killed. It is never safe for a child to be alone in a car. This happens to people of all races, social classes and professions. It can happen to you!

Q: What should I do if I see a child alone in a car?

A: The best thing you can do is to call 911 (EMS) immediately. Wait by the vehicle so EMS can find you quickly. EMS personnel are trained to assess a situation and determine if the child is in danger. If you determine that the child is severely impaired from outside the car, alert the 911 operator and follow their directions. You may have to provide bystander care and remove the child from the car. 911 may direct you to slowly cool and lower the body temperature by using a cool water mist or wipes until help arrives.

Q: What is meant by the term “near miss?”

A: A near miss describes when a child who has been left alone in a hot car is rescued before the situation becomes fatal. This term does not include situations where a child gets locked inside of a car but has a caregiver outside, seeking immediate help. For every child who dies after being left alone in a hot car, hundreds more are near misses, even by the most conservative estimates.

Q: How do very young children gain entry to a car?

A: Many kids gain entry into a car because the trunk or the doors are open. Parents should keep key fobs out of children’s reach. Once children get inside, they are quickly overcome by heat and they do not know how to problem solve and climb out. People with kids should check to be sure everyone is out of the car before they lock it and make sure the car is locked each and every time. People without kids should also lock their doors and trunks to keep neighborhood kids from climbing into their vehicles. If a child goes missing, always remember to check a pool FIRST then look in cars and trunks.

Q: What can I do to help?

A: First, you can make a personal commitment to never leave your child alone in the car. Second, urge your community to do the same. You can share information by posting flyers at your child’s nursery, school, local grocery, or anywhere you can think of. You can also help spread the word by sharing information on your Facebook, Twitter, or any other social media profiles.

Q: Who is Safe Kids Worldwide?

A: Safe Kids Worldwide is a global network of organizations with a mission of preventing unintentional childhood injury. Safe Kids Worldwide was founded in 1987 as the National SAFE KIDS Campaign by Children’s National Medical Center with support from Johnson & Johnson. Safe Kids Worldwide is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located in Washington, D.C. Twenty-one member countries bring together health and safety experts, educators, corporations, foundations, governments and volunteers to educate and protect families. We educate families, provide safety devices to families in need and advocate for better laws to help keep children safe, healthy and out of the emergency room.

Q: What is Safe Kids doing to prevent children from dying of heat stroke?

A: Safe Kids’ national program “Never Leave Your Child Alone in a Car” is raising awareness about the dangers of heat stroke and encouraging parents, caregivers, bystanders and the public to **ACT:**

Avoid heat stroke-related injury and death by:

- Never leaving your child alone in the car, even for a minute.
- Consistently locking unattended vehicle doors and trunks.

Create reminders and habits that give you and your child’s caregiver a safety net:

- Establish a peace-of-mind plan. When you drop off your child, make a habit of calling or texting all other caregivers, so all of you know where your child is at all times.
- Place a purse, briefcase, gym bag, cell phone or an item that is needed at your next stop in a back seat.
- Set the alarm on your cell phone or computer calendar as a reminder to drop your child off at childcare.

Take action if you see an unattended child in a vehicle:

- Dial 911 immediately and follow the instructions that emergency personnel provide – they are trained to determine if a child is in danger.