
Talking Points

The Issue

- Heatstroke, also known as hyperthermia, is the leading cause of non-crash, vehicle-related deaths for children.
- It occurs when the body can't cool itself quickly enough and the body temperature rises to dangerous levels.
- Young children are particularly at risk since their bodies heat up three to five times faster than an adult's.
- When a child's internal temperature gets to 104 degrees, major organs begin to shut down. And when that child's temperature reaches 107 degrees, the child can die.
- A car can heat up 19 degrees in 10 minutes. And cracking a window doesn't help.¹
- Symptoms can quickly progress from flushed, dry skin and vomiting to seizures, organ failure and death.

Who is Affected?

- These types of tragedies can happen to anyone, and most of the cases involve loving, caring parents.
- It's easy to become distracted when you are a new parent and are sleep deprived.
- Heatstroke tragedies often happen when someone's daily routine is changed or disrupted.

Key Stats

- Since 1998, more than 849 children across the United States have died from heatstroke when unattended in a vehicle.¹
 - 54% - child forgotten by caregiver
 - 26% - child gained access to an unattended vehicle
 - 19% - child intentionally left in vehicle by adult
 - 1% - unknown

In the last two years, over 100 have died from heatstroke. Since 2015 there has been a gradual increase in annual deaths:

- 2019 – 52 deaths
 - 2018 – 53 deaths (highest on record)
 - 2017 – 42 deaths
 - 2016 – 39 deaths
 - 2015 – 24 deaths
- Heatstroke deaths have been recorded every month of the year in nearly all 50 states.



Top Safety Tips

Safe Kids is asking everyone to help protect kids from this preventable tragedy by remembering to **ACT**.

- **A: Avoid** heatstroke-related injury and death by never leaving a child alone in a car, not even for a minute. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not inside so kids don't get in on their own.
- **C: Create reminders.** Keep a stuffed animal or other memento in your child's car seat when it's empty, and move it to the front seat as a visual reminder when your child is in the back seat. Or place and secure your phone, briefcase, or purse in the back seat when traveling with your child.
- **T: Take action.** If you see a child alone in a car, call 911. Emergency personnel want you to call. They are trained to respond to these situations. One call could save a life.

Program Partners

- Safe Kids supports the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) heatstroke education campaign and the increased national coordination on the issue.
- Safe Kids is a member of the NHTSA Heatstroke Partnership Working Group, comprised of likeminded allies, including the National Safety Council, Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association and KidAndCars.
- Safe Kids and its network of 400 coalitions across the nation, including police and fire departments, hospitals and doctors, government agencies, childcare centers and businesses, are helping to educate parents and caregivers about the dangers of leaving children alone in a car.

1. Null J. Pediatric Vehicular Heatstroke Factsheet. Department of Meteorology and Climate Science, San Jose State University Website. Accessed February 2019. Available from: <http://noheatstroke.org/>

