

Keeping Kids Safe: Prevent Child Death in Hot Cars

As we move through July and August, we are in the months with historically the highest average numbers of heatstroke deaths for children. According to the Kids and Cars website, 11 people have died in hot cars so far this year in the country from heatstroke, also known as, hyperthermia. These cases happen when kids are left unattended in a hot car -- sometimes because the driver forgot the child was there -- or when young children climb into unlocked cars to play. It does NOT have to be unusually hot or take very long for a vehicle to heat to temperatures that are potentially fatal. On an 80-degree day, it can take just 20 minutes for the inside of a car to heat up to 109 degrees. Heatstroke happens when a person's temperature goes above 104 degrees. A child's temperature increases three to five times faster than an adult's. Just a few minutes in a hot car can be extremely dangerous -- even fatal -- for a small child.

Here are some helpful tips to keep your kids safe:

1. Never leave your child alone in a car, even with the windows rolled down or the air conditioning on. In this time of coronavirus, parents may think that it is safer to keep children in the car to reduce COVID exposure in places like grocery stores, but it is not worth the risk. It is easy to get distracted or delayed in the store and no errand is worth the life of your child.
2. Keep car doors and trunks locked and keep keys and remote entry devices out of reach. Locking your car doors and reminding your neighbors (even those without kids) to do the same provides an important level of protection.
3. Create reminders to look before you lock. Get in the habit of checking the back seat before locking your car doors. Place a personal item, like your cell phone, briefcase, or purse, in the backseat whenever a child is there, so you'll see the child when you go to retrieve your item. Make it a habit to check your entire vehicle, front and back, before locking the door and walking away.
4. Take action. If you see a child alone in a car, call first responders at 911. They are trained to respond to these situations. One call could save a life.

By remembering to follow these important safety tips, together, we can keep our children safe from the dangers of heatstroke and hot cars. For more information regarding children left in cars and heatstroke, please visit Kids and Cars - www.kidsandcars.org and Safe Kids-www.safekids.org