

UNATTENDED CHILDREN IN HOT CARS

Every summer officials warn parents and caregivers about the deadly consequences of leaving unattended children in hot cars. Besides car crashes, heatstroke is the leading cause of death for children 14 years and younger.

AAA and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) urge adults to “look before you lock.” According to statistics, on average every 10 days a child dies from heatstroke because of being left alone in a car.

Darker colored cars can reach slightly higher temperatures than lighter colored cars and large cars can heat up just as fast as small cars.

The temperature and humidity inside the car begin to increase while the airflow decreases. As the temperature increases inside the car the child begin to develop heat stress.

The body temperature of a child can rise up to five times faster than an adult. The onset of heatstroke occurs when the body temperature reaches 104 degrees, and is lethal at 107 degrees. On an 80 degree day a car can reach deadly temperatures in just 10 minutes.

HEATSTROKE

During a heatstroke, the body is unable to cool down due to failure of the sweating mechanism, resulting in death or permanent disability if no emergency treatment is provided.

The warning signs of a heatstroke are

- red, hot, and moist or dry skin
- either rapid or slow pulse
- nausea
- confusion
- not sweating
- difficulty to console
- dehydration

Officials advise that if a child shows any of these symptoms after being in a hot vehicle, call 911 immediately. Until emergency help arrives, cool the child by spraying with cool water, but **NEVER** submerge in ice bath.

AAA urges all parents and caregivers to:

- **NEVER** leave a child in an unattended vehicle even if the vehicle is parked in the shade with windows partially open. Even on a mild overcast day, the internal temperature of the vehicle can quickly increase.
- **MAKE** it a habit to look in the backseat every time you exit the car.
- **DO NOT** let your child play in an unattended vehicle – teach your child that a car is not a play area.
- **ALWAYS** lock the car and keep keys out of the reach of children.
- If you even spot a child unattended in a hot vehicle, **CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY.**
- **DISCUSS** the issues of hot car safety with everyone who drives your child.
- During the summer months, there is no safe amount of time to leave a child alone in a car.

REFERENCES. RESOURCES TO CONTACT & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- AAA Issues Warning About Leaving Children in Hot Cars (<http://www.baltimoresun.com/features/maryland-family/now/bal-aaa-issues-warning-about-leaving-children-in-hot-cars-20130709-story.html>)
- Kids In Hot Cars (<http://www.mynrma.com.au/motoring-services/education/children/hot-cars.htm>)
- Rising Temps Bring Concerns for Children Left in Hot Cars (<http://www.wboc.com/story/29324137/rising-temps-bring-concerns-for-children-left-in-hot-cars>)
- Summer Dangers AAA Report (<http://www.redmond-reporter.com/community/307622801.html>)
- Prevent Child Heatstroke in Cars (<http://www.safercar.gov/parents/InandAroundtheCar/heatstroke.htm>)