

Prevent Child Deaths in Hot Cars

A child left in a hot car can die of heat stroke very quickly. But this tragedy can be prevented.

Facts about Child Heat Stroke in Cars

Here are some facts about hot cars and keeping kids safe:



- Heat stroke ([/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Protecting-Children-from-Extreme-Heat-Information-for-Parents.aspx](#)) is the leading cause of non-crash, vehicle-related deaths in children under 15.
- Heat stroke can happen when the body is not able to cool itself quickly enough.
- A child's body heats up three to five times faster than an adult's does.
 - When left in a hot car, a child's major organs begin to shut down when his temperature reaches 104 degrees Fahrenheit (F).
 - A child can die when his temperature reaches 107 degrees F.
- Cars heat up quickly! In just 10 minutes, a car can heat up 20 degrees F.
- Cracking a window and/or air conditioning does little to keep it cool once the car is turned off.
- Heat stroke can happen when the outside temperature is as low as 57 degrees F.
- Because of climate change ([/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Climate-Change-Policy-Explained.aspx](#)), we can expect more days to be hotter. Also, hotter days can happen throughout the year.

Set Reminders!

Any parent or caregiver, even a very loving and attentive one, can forget a child is in the back seat. Being especially busy or distracted or having a change from the usual routine increases the risk.

Here are some things you can do to prevent the unthinkable from happening to your child:

- Always check the back seat and make sure all children are out of the car before locking it and walking away.
- Avoid distractions while driving, especially cell phone use ([/English/ages-stages/teen/safety/Pages/Text-Messaging-Safety.aspx](#)).

- Be extra alert when there is a change in your routine, like when someone else is driving (</English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Carpool-Safety.aspx>) your child or you take a different route to work or child care.
- Have your child care provider call if your child is more than 10 minutes late.
- Put your cell phone, bag, or purse in the back seat, so you check the back seat when you arrive at your destination.
- If someone else is driving your child, always check to make sure he has arrived safely.

Lock Your Car!

Keep your car locked when it is parked to prevent a curious child from entering when no one is around. Many hot car deaths have occurred when a child mistakenly locks himself inside.

Here are some reminders for parents and caregivers:

- Make sure children do not have easy access to your car keys. Store them out of a child's reach (</English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Childproofing-Your-Home.aspx>).
- Teach children that cars are not safe places to play.
- Keep rear fold-down seats closed to prevent a child from crawling into the trunk from inside the car.
- Remind children that cars, especially car trunks, should not be used for games like hide-and-seek.

Important Tip: If a child is missing, always check the pool first (</English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Swimming-Pool-Safety.aspx>), **and then the car, including the trunk!**

Take Action if You See a Child Alone in a Car!

Protecting children is everyone's business! If you see an unattended child in a car and are concerned, you should immediately call 911.

If the child is not responsive or is in pain, immediately:

- Call 911.
- Get the child out of the car.
- Spray the child with cool water (not in an ice bath).

If the child is responsive:

- Stay with the child until help arrives.
- Have someone else search for the driver or ask the facility to page them.

Additional Information & Resources:

- [Protecting Children From Extreme Heat: Information for Parents \(/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Protecting-Children-from-Extreme-Heat-Information-for-Parents.aspx\)](#)
- [Childproofing Your Home \(/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Childproofing-Your-Home.aspx\)](#)
- [NoHeatStroke.org \(http://noheatstroke.org/\)](http://noheatstroke.org/)
- [ItsThatSerious.org \(http://www.itsthatserious.org/\)](http://www.itsthatserious.org/)
- [SaferCar.gov/Heatstroke \(http://www.safercar.gov/heatstroke\)](http://www.safercar.gov/heatstroke)

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