



2019 Heatstroke

HOT CARS KILL KIDS

Heatstroke Fact Sheet

In the span of 10 minutes, a car can heat up by 20 degrees, enough to kill a child left alone in the vehicle. The U.S. Department of Transportation, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and other safety advocates and academic institutions have recognized the safety threat heatstroke poses for children left unattended in hot cars. Here are the key facts:

Heatstroke is the leading cause of not-in-traffic non-crash related fatalities for children 14 and younger.

- So far in 2019, [XX] children have died due to vehicular heatstroke, and that number continues to rise.
- From 1998-2018, 794 children died due to vehicular heatstroke. Of the 794 deaths:
 - 54 percent (427 children) were forgotten by a caregiver;
 - 26 percent (209 children) were playing in an unattended vehicle;
 - 18 percent (148 children) were intentionally left in vehicle by an adult; and
 - 1 percent (10 children) died under unknown circumstances.
- In 2018, 51 children died in vehicular heatstroke incidents.
- Children are at a higher risk than adults of dying from heatstroke in a hot vehicle, especially when they are too young to alert others for help.
- A child's body temperature rises three to five times faster than an adult's.

High body temperatures can cause permanent injury or even death.

- Heatstroke begins when the core body temperature reaches about 104 degrees and the thermoregulatory system is overwhelmed. A core temperature of about 107 degrees is lethal.
- In 10 minutes a car can heat up by 20 degrees. Rolling down a window does little to keep a vehicle cool.
- Heatstroke fatalities have occurred even in vehicles parked in shaded areas and when the outside air temperatures were 80 degrees Fahrenheit or less.
- Summertime is the peak season for these tragic incidents, but heatstroke can occur in outdoor temperatures as low as 57 degrees. The warning signs of heatstroke vary, but may include:



- Red, hot, and moist or dry skin
- No sweating
- A strong rapid pulse or a slow weak pulse
- A throbbing headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Being grouchy or acting strangely

It can happen to anyone.

- In 54 percent of cases, the child was forgotten by the caregiver.
- In 26 percent of cases, children got into the vehicles on their own.
- The children most at-risk are those under 1 year, making up 32 percent of heatstroke deaths.

Remember these three things:

- NEVER leave a child in a vehicle unattended.
- Make it a habit to look in the back seat EVERY time you exit the car.
- ALWAYS lock the car and put the keys out of reach.

Additional Resources

- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration - www.nhtsa.gov/heatstroke
- San Jose State University, Department of Meteorology & Climate Science - www.noheatstroke.org
- Safe Kids Worldwide - www.safekids.org
- Children's Hospital of Philadelphia - www.chop.edu