

# The Medical Minute: Hot weather and vehicles are a deadly combination

August 12 2009, By Susan E. Rzucidlo

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A few minutes might not seem like a long time, but there are circumstances when it can mean the difference between life and death. During the "dog days" of summer, children are at serious risk for heat stroke if left alone, even for a few minutes, in a closed vehicle. Last year at least 42 children across the United States died from heatstroke brought on by entrapment in a vehicle.

Heat is much more dangerous to [children](#) than it is to adults. When left in a hot vehicle, a young child's core body temperature may increase three to five times faster than that of an adult. This could cause permanent injury or even death. [Heat stroke](#) occurs when the core body temperature reaches 104 degrees Fahrenheit. A core body temperature of 107 degrees Fahrenheit is considered lethal.

The inside of a vehicle can rise 19 degrees above the outside temperature in just 10 minutes. After an hour, the temperature inside and outside of a vehicle can differ by 45 degrees or more, even if the window is left open a crack.

Safe [Kids](#) USA and General Motors created the Never Leave Your Child Alone program to educate families on the dangers kids face in hot vehicles.

According to research conducted by San Francisco State University, even with relatively cool temperatures outside -- 70 degrees -- the inside of a car can reach a dangerous temperature in just minutes.

The research also revealed that more than half of these children were accidentally left behind in a closed, parked car by parents or caregivers while nearly a third of these children were trapped while playing in a vehicle unattended. Sadly, one in five children who died were intentionally left in the vehicle by an adult.

Safe Kids suggests these tips for parents and caregivers:

- Teach children not to play in, on or around vehicles.
- Never leave a child unattended in a [vehicle](#), even with the window slightly open.
- Always lock a vehicle's doors and trunk, especially at home. Keep keys and remote entry devices out of children's reach.
- Place something that you'll need at your next stop -- such as a purse, a lunch, gym bag or briefcase -- on the floor of the backseat where the child is sitting. This simple act could help prevent you from accidentally forgetting a child.

For more information on keeping you and your family safe at home, play and on the way, call the injury prevention line at (717) 531-7233.

Safe Kids Dauphin County, led by Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital, is part of the [National Safe Kids Campaign](#), the first and only national nonprofit organization dedicated solely to the prevention of unintentional childhood injury, the number one killer of children ages 14 and under. More than 300 state and local Safe Kids Coalitions in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico make up the campaign.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University ([news](#) : [web](#))

12) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-08-medical-minute-hot-weather-vehicles.html>

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