

Children's hospital at vanderbilt urges parents to guard against extreme heat

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With indexes as high as 110 degrees this week in Middle Tennessee, doctors at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt are asking parents to remain vigilant against hyperthermia and other heat-related illnesses.

Infants and young children are particularly susceptible to heat. A child's body heats up 3 to 5 times faster than an adult's, and when the body's temperature reaches 104 degrees, the internal organs begin to shut down.

Thomas Abramo, M.D., chief of the Division of Pediatric Emergency Medicine, says the emergency room has treated several heat-related illnesses this week, and knows that more cases could potentially be on the way. Each summer, he says, the emergency department sees a handful of cases where children are left alone in hot cars, which is now illegal in Tennessee. According to Safe Kids USA, since 1998, more than 500 children died from hyperthermia or heat stroke when left unattended in a vehicle.

"A stationary vehicle can get up to 140 degrees in less than 2 to 3 minutes, even with the windows open," says Abramo. "It's never okay to leave a child alone in a hot car-- not even for one minute."

Children's Hospital offers the following tips to avoid vehicle-related heat injuries or death:

- Use cell phone or computer reminders to make sure children have been

dropped off at the desired location.

- Place an item that you always take from the car into your destination in the backseat with your child.
- If your child is missing, check vehicles and trunks first.
- Teach your children never to play in vehicles in order to prevent them from accidentally locking themselves inside one. Be sure to lock all doors and windows to vehicles on your property.

In addition, says Abramo, the current high humidity index means children will sweat more than usual and get dehydrated faster, which means they are at greater risk for [heat](#) stroke or exhaustion. With summer sports camps in full swing, he says it's important to keep children hydrated, since they often will not tell you that they need fluids until it's too late. It's also important to provide appropriate periods for rest and recovery to prevent overuse injuries.

Parent should be aware of the key symptoms of dehydration:

- Complaints of a headache or tiredness
- Decreasing bathroom breaks
- Nausea
- Unsteadiness or dizziness

For detailed safety information, please visit [Children's Hospital's website](#)

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Provided by Vanderbilt Medical Center

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