

Frequently Asked Questions 2019

Q: What is heatstroke?

A: Heatstroke (hyperthermia) occurs when the body isn't able to cool itself quickly enough and a person's body temperature rises to dangerous levels.

Q: What are symptoms of heatstroke?

A: Symptoms include dizziness, disorientation, agitation, confusion, sluggishness, seizure, hot or dry skin (flushed but not sweaty), loss of consciousness, rapid heartbeat or hallucinations.

Q: Why are children at risk in cars?

A: Children are at great risk for heatstroke because a child's body heats up three to five times faster than an adult's. When the body's temperature reaches 104 degrees, a child's internal organs start to shut down. When it reaches 107 degrees, the child can die.

Q: Why are we hearing so much about this now?

A: Safe Kids works with partners around the country to raise awareness about this preventable tragedy. When the sun is out, and even on cloudy days, the inside of a car can become much hotter than the temperature outside. In just 10 minutes, a car can heat up 19 degrees. On an 80-degree day, the inside of a closed car can quickly exceed 100 degrees. Cracking a window does not help keep the inside of a car cool.¹

Q: How are children dying?

A: Children die as a result of **being alone in a car** in one of three ways: ¹

- 54% - child was forgotten by caregiver
- 26% - child gained access to a vehicle and became trapped
- 18% - child was intentionally left by an adult
- 1% - unknown

Q: How many children die from heatstroke?

A: Across the United States, more than 790 children have died since 1998 because they were trapped in a hot car. An average of 38 children die every year, and for every child who dies, hundreds more are rescued.

Q: How can a driver be sure not to forget a child in a back seat?

A: The best way to remember a child is to leave something you'll need at your next destination in the back seat. This could be a purse, briefcase, gym bag, cell phone or anything else you'll have to

take with you. You can also set the alarm on your cell phone or computer calendar as a reminder to drop your child off at child care.

Q: What should parents and caregivers do to protect kids from heatstroke?

A: The best strategy is to **never leave a child alone in a car**—not even for a minute. Take your child with you whenever you leave the vehicle. Incidents of heatstroke have occurred when someone ran into a store and lost track of time. It doesn't take long for a child to be at great risk of death or injury when alone in a car. Make sure you make it clear to your babysitter or other caregivers that it is never okay to leave a child alone in a car.

Q: Are there laws about this?

A: Yes, 29 states have laws, but each state law is different. Some states may consider this action to be felony child neglect if a child is injured or killed. <https://www.noheatstroke.org/legal.htm>

Q: What should I do if I see a child alone in a car?

A: If you see a child alone in a car, call 911. Emergency personnel want you to call. They are trained to respond to these situations. A simple phone call could save a life.

Q: What is meant by the term "near miss"?

A: A near miss describes when a child is **unattended in a hot car** and is rescued before the situation becomes fatal. This term does not include situations where a child gets locked inside of a car with a caregiver outside who can seek immediate help. For every child who dies unattended in a hot car, there are hundreds of near misses, even by the most conservative estimates.

Q: How do young children gain entry to a car?

A: Many kids get into a car because the trunk or the doors are left open or unlocked. Parents should keep keys and key fobs out of children's reach. Once children get inside, they can be quickly overcome by heat and not know how to climb out. People with kids should check to be sure everyone is out of the car before locking it. They also need to be sure the car is locked every time. Even if you don't have children, remember to lock doors and trunks to keep neighborhood kids from climbing into your vehicles.

Q: How can I help?

A: First, you can make a personal commitment to never leave a child alone in the car. Second, urge your family, friends and neighbors to do the same. You can share information by posting flyers at your child’s nursery, school, and local grocery or anywhere you can think of. You can also help spread the word by posting on your Facebook, Twitter or any other social media platforms. If you see a child alone in a car, call 911. One call could save a life.

Q: Who is Safe Kids Worldwide?

A: Safe Kids Worldwide is a nonprofit organization working to protect kids on the road, at home and at play. Preventable injuries are the number one cause of death for children in the United States. Throughout the world, almost one million children die of an injury each year, and almost every one of these tragedies is preventable. Safe Kids works with an extensive network of more than 400 coalitions in the U.S. and with partners in more than 30 countries to reduce traffic injuries, drownings, falls, burns, poisonings and more. Since 1988, Safe Kids has helped reduce the U.S. childhood death rate from unintentional injury by 57 percent. Working together, we can do much more for kids everywhere. Join our effort at safekids.org.

Q: What is Safe Kids doing to prevent children from dying of heatstroke?

A: With support from Chevrolet, Safe Kids national program “Never Leave a Child Alone in a Car” is raising awareness about the dangers of heatstroke. Safe Kids wants everyone to ACT.

- **A: Avoid** heatstroke-related injury and death by never leaving a child alone in a car, not even for a minute. And make sure to keep your car locked when you’re not in it so kids don’t get in on their own.
- **C: Create reminders** by putting something in the back of your car next to your child such as a briefcase, a purse or a cell phone that you need at your final destination. This is especially important if you’re not following your normal routine.
- **T: Take action.** If you see a child alone in a car, call 911. Emergency personnel want you to call. They are trained to respond to these situations. One call could save a life.

1. Null J. Pediatric Vehicular Heatstroke Factsheet. Department of Meteorology and Climate Science, San Jose State University Website. Accessed February 2019. Available from: <http://noheatstroke.org/>