

Kids and Cars tips for heat stroke prevention

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. — [KidsAndCars.org](#), along with other child-safety advocacy groups and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), will mark Heat Stroke Prevention Day on July 31 with increased efforts to raise awareness and educate parents and caregivers about ways to prevent children from being unknowingly left alone in a hot vehicle. Heat stroke is the leading cause of non-crash vehicle fatalities for children 14 and younger, but can be prevented. On Heat Stroke Prevention Day KidsAndCars.org volunteers will visit birthing centers in cities nationally to distribute Look Before You Lock™ safety education cards for new and expectant parents.

KidsAndCars.org, the only and leading national nonprofit group dedicated solely to preventing injuries and deaths of children in and around motor vehicles, to date has distributed over 320,000 of the safety information cards to birthing centers and hospitals nationally.

Participating agencies will also post social media messages throughout the day, asking people to share the posts on Facebook and retweet using #heatstroke.

“A change in routine, fatigue, distraction, anxiety – each can lead to a tragic momentary memory lapse,” notes Janette Fennell, founder and president of KidsAndCars.org. “It can happen to anybody, even the most loving and attentive parents.”

It has happened to teachers, a pediatrician, dentist, postal clerk, social worker, police officer, nurse, clergyman, electrician, accountant, soldier, assistant principal and even a rocket scientist.

The number of child heat stroke deaths in vehicles continues to average approximately 37 per year; or about one every 10 days. Since the group began tracking data, at least 670 children have died in these preventable tragedies.

A parked car can reach 125 degrees in minutes, even when the windows are partially open. Children are especially vulnerable to heat stroke, as their body temperatures rise three to five times faster than an adult’s.

All parents need to carefully follow the guidelines for placing car seats in the back seat – the safest place for children to ride. Additionally, babies should ride rear-facing in their car seats till age 2, according to the guidelines prescribed by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

At the same time, parents must understand that while requiring children to ride in the back seat has saved many lives, it also requires drivers to take extra precautions to avoid children from being unknowingly left alone in a vehicle.

“Following KidsAndCars.org’s Look Before You Lock safety education tips doesn’t cost a penny, and provides several layers of protection so your child will not be unknowingly left in a vehicle,” Fennell added. “We never know when there might be a day that our memory fails us, so we urge parents to implement these easy-to-follow instructions so that they become a habit for them and all who care for their child.”

KidsAndCars.org’s Look Before You Lock safety education tips include:

- Get in the habit of always opening the back door of your vehicle every time you reach your destination to check to make sure no child – or pet – has been left behind.
- Keep a large stuffed animal in the child’s car seat. Right before the child is placed in the seat, move the stuffed animal to the front passenger seat as a visual reminder that your child is in the back seat.
- Put something you’ll need on the floorboard in the back seat in front of your child’s car seat (cell phone, handbag, employee ID, briefcase, etc.). This ensures you open the back door of your vehicle to retrieve your belongings.
- Make arrangements with your daycare provider or babysitter to call you within 10 minutes if your child does not arrive as expected.
- Never leave children alone in or around cars, not even for a minute. Instead, use drive-thru services when available.
- Keep vehicles locked at all times; even in the garage or driveway and keep car keys and remote openers out of reach of children.
- When a child is missing, check vehicles and car trunks immediately.

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