

Simple reminder can save a child's life

By Brandon Dumsky brandon.dumsky@examiner.net Posted Jun. 26, 2014 @ 10:50 am



Erin Wiesner and her baby daughter, Kathleen, demonstrate how to use a stuffed animal toy to serve as a reminder that a child is left in the back seat when leaving a vehicle Wednesday at Centerpoint Medical Center in Independence. According to KidsAndCare.org, heat stroke is the leading cause of non-crash vehicle fatalities in children ages 14 and younger. Brandon Dumsky | The Examiner

Independence, Mo.

During these summer months, a parked car can reach 125 degrees in just minutes – even when the windows are partially open. And in today's more hectic and stressful world, parents – both new and experienced – can mistakenly leave their children inside these furnaces that leave them susceptible to heatstroke.

However, Centerpoint Medical Center in Independence and KidsAndCars.org, a child safety advocacy group, are educating busy parents tips on how to remind themselves to prevent such tragedies – and one recommendation involves a stuffed animal.

KidsAndCars.org Director Amber Rollins says keeping a stuffed animal in your child's car seat at all times will serve as a visual reminder to check the backseat before you leave the vehicle.

"Always leave it in your child's seat and place it in the front seat when driving with your child," she said.

Besides a stuffed animal, something valuable, such as a cell phone, purse or wallet, would also suffice as a substitute, she added.

According to Rollins, heat stroke is the leading cause of non-crash vehicle fatalities for children ages 14 and younger. So far a total of 13 children nationwide were reported to have died from being left inside a heat stroke-inducing car this year, she said.

"Of those fatalities, 87 percent were less than 3 years old."

Although Atif Ali, a Centerpoint emergency medicine doctor, says the hospital has only treated three non-children patients for heat stroke this summer, it still wants to raise awareness to prevent an avoidable tragedy from happening in Eastern Jackson County. Younger children suffering from a heat stroke can remain unnoticed.

"The smaller the child (in age), the more difficult it is for them to regulate their body temperature," he said. "Their (body) temperature can get up to 105 degrees within 10 to 15 minutes (if left inside a hot car). They haven't developed their sweat mechanisms yet."

Symptoms of a child having a heatstroke include irritability, red/dry skin, increased thirst and pulse and even confusion, he added.

Rollins also said parents leaving their child inside a car during the hot summer months is not a recent phenomenon, either, and it has been occurring since the mid-1990s.

"Kids were often being put in the front seat back then," she said. "But the big concern was airbags being deployed that could cause injuries. So they were placed in the backseat, which left unintended consequences."

As for reasons why children are accidentally left inside a potentially fatal vehicle could be the result of a "myriad of problems," Rollins added.

"It could be a million things," she added. "Parents can be distracted with their jobs, having lack of sleep and changes in their normal, everyday routine."

Plus with the trend of both mom and dad working nowadays, along with balancing parental duties, can prompt forgetfulness.

Above all, it's more of a fast-paced and demanding modern world that can induce stress. But one stuffed animal can prevent a lifetime of regret, Rollins added.

For more information about KidsAndCare, visit www.kidsandcare.org.

<http://www.examiner.net/article/20140626/News/140629186#ixzz35lfBaHoV>