

# It's your brain's fault: How any parent could forget their child in a hot car

[Sarah Buduson](#) 10:04 PM, Jul 7, 2014



MEDINA, Ohio - The idea of forgetting your child inside a vehicle may seem impossible to you.

But experts say the risk is real.

"There but for pure luck, it could be you," said Dr. Max Wiznitzer, a pediatric neurologist at University Hospitals.

Wiznitzer said our brains are wired for routines and habits.

"When you do the habit behavior over and over and over again that actually becomes the fixed or preferred method of doing it. It's the pathway the brain will normally follow and not deviate to something else," he said. "The routine changes

and you forget."

"If you're dropping your child off and it's not part of your regular routine, you might keep on going to straight to where you're going, rather than saying I'm supposed to stop at Place X," said Wiznitzer.

Todd and Melody Costello know all too well how the brain's habits can become destructive.

On July 29, 2002, a change in their daily routine changed their lives.

"That morning it just seemed convenient for us to switch roles and to switch duties," said Todd.

Melody usually took Tyler to daycare. That day it was Todd's job.

"I got to work and the day started. And quite literally, it wasn't until hours later that a fellow employee is in the doorway of my office yelling at the time something very incoherent about my car and my son," he said.

Todd had left his 9-month-old son Tyler in the backseat of his car for three hours outside his Medina office.

"I'm petrified. I'm just ... the visual of seeing someone work on your son, your infant son ... it's hard to describe. It's painful, it's scary, it's numbing."

By the time help arrived, it was too late.

"His body temperature had gotten, it was 108, and it was just too high and his organs had shut down and there wasn't anything that they could do to save him," said Melody.

## [SAFETY TIPS: How to avoid leaving your child in a hot car](#)

"I still struggle with it. We're 12 years later, coming up on the 12-year anniversary and it brings up all the emotions. It brings up all the self-doubt. I start replaying things in my own mind and I can't sometimes answer my own questions," said Todd.

Today, the Costello's remain committed to sharing their story in hopes of preventing another family from losing a loved one.

"I wouldn't anyone else to experience this if they didn't have to," said Todd.

"We do it so that other families can look at us and say, 'We could be that family'," said Melody

Since 1990, at least 717 children have died from heatstroke after being left inside a car, according to [KidsAndCars.org](#), a non-profit that raises awareness about the danger of kids and cars.

In Ohio, at least 16 children have died since 1993.

According to Dr. Wiznitzer, it takes just minutes for a car to become dangerously hot for an infant.

In order to show how quickly the temperatures can become deadly, NewsChannel5 investigators placed a thermometer inside a vehicle on July 2. It took exactly one hour for the temperature to reach 109 degrees.

Copyright 2014 Scripps Media, Inc. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

<http://www.newsnet5.com/news/local-news/investigations/its-your-brains-fault-why-any-parent-could-forget-their-child-in-a-hot-car>