

Why are children left in sweltering cars? Reasons, risks and safety tips from an expert

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(THE CANADIAN PRESS / Aaron Harris)

A two-year-old was found dead inside a sweltering car this week in Milton, Ont., leaving parents wondering how this could have possibly happened.

Police say an autopsy confirms that the boy had been exposed to scorching temperatures after spending an extended period inside a parked car outside his Milton home.

“People think that it is monsters or terrible parents, but this is happening to the most educated, responsible people,” Amber Rollins, director of kidsandcars.org said. With so much going on with young parents, or parents of a young child, our brains just don’t function the way they normally would, Rollins said.

“The number one thing that we tell people is don’t ever think that this can’t happen to you,” Rollins said. Rollins says that everyone has walked into a room and forgotten why they are there, only these situations do not have fatal consequences.

Another reason for child fatalities inside vehicles may have something to do with laws that put children in the back seat to avoid airbags.

Numbers out of the U.S. show that heat stroke deaths for children left in cars have been dramatically on the rise since laws forced children to sit in the backseat to avoid high-powered airbags.

“As soon as that happened we saw these heat stroke deaths of children being forgotten in the car reach an all-time high, I mean they just blew up. It went from a couple a year to maybe 30 or 40 a year,” Rollins said.

“It has far surpassed the number of children being killed by airbags,” she added.

In 1997 there were 29 airbag related deaths in the U.S., and 11 children died in vehicles from heat stroke. In 2010 airbag deaths have all but been eliminated, but 49 children died inside cars from heat stroke.

“This in no way implies children should be placed in the front seat; they are much safer in the back seat,” the kidsandcars.org website said.

The numbers do suggest, according to Rollins, that children in the backseat are far more easily forgotten than children in the front seat.

Kidsandcars.org has several safety tips for all parents to keep in mind:

- Never leave children alone in or around cars, not even for a minute.
- Put something you’ll need like your cell phone, handbag on the floor board in the back seat.
- Get in the habit of always opening the back door every time you reach your destination to make sure no child has been left behind.
- Keep a large stuffed animal in the child’s car seat when your child is not with you, and in the front passenger seat when your child is with you.
- If you see a child alone in a vehicle, get involved. If they seem hot or seem sick, get them out as quickly as possible. Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately.

<http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/why-are-children-left-in-sweltering-cars-reasons-risks-and-safety-tips-from-an-expert-1.1344956#ixzz2XX4LNHpX>