

# Heat and Unattended Kids in Cars Do NOT Go Together

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**Leaving children and pets unattended in cars** is often emphasized during hot weather, although it's something we need to think about daily.

With temperatures in the 90s this week — and rising the rest of the summer — we're going to focus this week on this important topic. Today, we start with some quick tips and a checklist to remind us to **look before you lock your car**.

The [Kids and Cars organization](#) reports that since 1998, an average of 38 children die every year from vehicular heat stroke — that's one every 9 days. And it doesn't just happen elsewhere. Just this past weekend a local [8-month-old baby was left in a car and died](#).

## How Does this Happen?

There are several factors that contribute to children being inadvertently forgotten by care givers. Paramount is the fact that our brains are not keeping up with the demands of our busy lives. The most common factors include a change in one's normal routine, lack of sleep, stress, fatigue, distractions and hormone changes. When these factors combine, the ability for the brain to multi-task is diminished.

As parents know, life with newborns and small children is full of stress, sleep deprivation and distractions. And young children, especially babies, often fall asleep in their car seats; becoming quiet, unobtrusive little passengers. And sadly, for babies with rear-facing seats, the seat looks the same from the front seat – whether occupied or not.

## Never Leave Your Children Alone in a Vehicle – Not Even for a Minute!

- Some people may think it's OK to leave children in cars to run an errand, so they crack the window open. Some people may literally forget about a quiet, sleeping child in the back of their car as happens dozens of times a year across the country. Regardless, know the dangers. A **child's body temperature rises 3-5 times faster than an adult's**. Put something you'll need like your cellphone, handbag, employee ID or brief case, etc., on the floor board in the back seat.
- Get in the habit of always opening the back door of your vehicle every time you reach your destination to make sure no child has been left behind. This will soon become a habit. Kids and Cars calls this the "Look Before You Lock" campaign.
- Keep a large stuffed animal in the child's car seat when it's not occupied. When the child is placed in the seat, put the stuffed animal in the front passenger seat. It's a visual reminder that anytime the stuffed animal is up front you know the child is in the back seat in a child safety seat.
- Make arrangements with your child's day care center or babysitter that you will always call if your child will not be there on a particular day as scheduled.
- Use drive-thru services when available (restaurants, banks, pharmacies, dry cleaners, etc.) instead of "running in for just a minute."
- And if you see a child alone in a vehicle, get involved and call 9-1-1 immediately. If they are hot or seem sick, get them out as quickly as possible.

# SAFETY CHECKLIST

Planning can help keep your child from being hurt.

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## Back seat:

- ✓ Put something in the back seat of your vehicle that requires you to open the back door every time you park – cell phone, employee badge, handbag, etc.



## Every child:

- ✓ Every child should be correctly restrained in the back seat.



## Stuffed animal:

- ✓ Keep a stuffed animal in your child's car seat. Place it on the front seat as a reminder when your baby is in the back seat.



## Ask your babysitter:

- ✓ Ask your babysitter or child care provider to call you if your child hasn't arrived on time.



## Focus on driving:


- ✓ Avoid cell phone calls and texting while driving.



## Every time you park:

- ✓ Make it a routine to open the back door of your car every time you park to check that no one has been left behind.



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For additional information about ways to keep children safe in and around vehicles, visit [www.KidsAndCars.org](http://www.KidsAndCars.org).

<http://fairfaxcountyemergency.wordpress.com/2013/07/08/heat-and-unattended-kids-in-cars-do-not-go-together/>