

Children in Hot Cars: Hyperthermia

Never leave children in cars: a major risk of death through hyperthermia (heat stroke)

Why is it so risky?

- Car temperatures can rise 10 to 15 degrees Celsius every 15 minutes. Opening windows does not significantly slow down the rate down.¹
- A child's body temperature rises 3 to 5 times faster than an adult's due to lower water reserves.²
- Hyperthermia can occur in minutes, and fatalities within 2 hours.³
- Hyperthermia can occur on days as cool as just 22 degrees Celsius, when the inside of a car can quickly reach 47 degrees Celsius.³

How could a parent forget?

Sometimes parents intentionally leave a child in a car, underestimating the risk. Often, however, a busy parent forgets that the child is still in the car, especially on the way to or from work and day care. Tragically, most parents do not realise they have forgotten the child until it is too late. These incidents can happen to any parent or caregiver.^{4,5}

How common is it?

Between 2007 and 2009, there were 26 such cases of hyperthermia in France and Belgium, including 7 fatalities. 54% of the parents had intentionally left the child in the car, 46% had simply forgotten to drop the child off.⁵

In Israel between 2004 and 2008 there were four fatal cases, and in 2008 alone, 19 non-fatal cases.⁵

Netherlands, Iceland and Hungary have all reported recent fatal cases.⁵

In the United States an average of 36 children die from hyperthermia each year, for a total of 468 deaths over the last 12 years.³

Prevention Tips

- Dial 112 immediately if you see a child alone in a car.
- Place your personal items (purse, computer) in the backseat. That way you are more likely to see that the child is still with you when you exit the car.
- Place the child's personal items (diaper bag, bottle) in the front seat as a reminder to you.
- Add a daily "reminder" to your computer or telephone to ensure you've dropped your child off.
- Whenever there is a change in drop off and pick up arrangements, confirm the plan worked out with your partner.
- Arrange that your day care provider will call you if the child is not dropped off when expected.



FACTS



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References

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