

Hot Cars and Kids are a Deadly Combination

June 8, 2008—Henderson County, NC—Warm weather is here, and with that comes more time outdoors, lots of opportunity for exercise and health benefits...and increased risks for children that unfortunately go hand-in-hand with the best of the season. With these risks in mind, state public health officials are urging parents and other caregivers to not leave children in cars.

"The death of a child in a hot car is a tragedy that doesn't have to happen," said State Health Director Dr. Leah Devlin. "The temperature inside a car can heat up very quickly, and a child left in a car is at great risk for heat-related death. No one should ever leave a child in a parked car – not even for a few minutes."

On a warm, sunny day, even at temperatures as mild as 60 degrees, a closed vehicle can heat up to dangerous levels in a matter of minutes. During the summer months, the temperature inside a parked car can reach more than 120 degrees in as little as 10 minutes. Direct sunlight and a dark-colored car further speed the process.

Heat exhaustion can occur at temperatures above 90 degrees, and heat stroke can occur when temperatures rise above 105 degrees. If not treated immediately, heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke.

Since 1999, 13 North Carolina children have died of hyperthermia after being left by parents or caregivers in hot cars.

All caregivers should follow these tips concerning children, cars and heat:

- Never leave your child in an unattended car, even with the windows down.
- Check to make sure all children leave the vehicle when you reach your destination, particularly when loading and unloading. Don't overlook sleeping infants.
- Make sure you check the temperature of the child safety seat surface and safety belt buckles before restraining your children in the car.
- Make sure that unoccupied cars are locked, so that children don't accidentally become trapped.

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