

Hot Cars and Kids - Avoiding a Deadly Mistake

Summer is here and that will mean hot temps in the coming months. Child safety experts want to remind parents that leaving a child in a hot car, even for a few minutes, can be a deadly mistake.

Ginger Streitmatter is a Child Passenger Safety Technician with OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois. She says the outdoor temperature multiplies quickly inside a car.

“There is no air flow and nothing moving, and so in 10 minutes your car is going to rise 20 degrees,” she warns. “So if you think about it, your car is 90 degrees, it can easily escalate to over 100 degrees just within 10 minutes.”

According to Streitmatter, the temperature can be as low as 57 degrees outside and still create a dangerous environment for kids inside a vehicle.

Injury prevention advocacy group, [Safe Kids Worldwide](#), says heat stroke, which happens when the body is not able to cool itself quickly enough, is the leading cause of non-crash, vehicle-related deaths in children under 15.

A child's body heats up much faster than an adult's. When left in a hot car, a child's major organs begin to shut down when their internal temperature reaches 104 degrees, and a child can die when their temperature reaches 107 degrees.

“A lot of times you’re like, ‘Oh – I can just crack the window,’ but cracking the window will not offer what a child needs to be able to survive,” says Streitmatter.

Streitmatter puts her car to the test. Holding a surface thermometer, she checks a car seat that has been sitting in a vehicle during a pleasant, sunny morning.

“Right now we are going to take a surface temperature of our car seat,” she says, as she aims the thermometer at the seat.

“Our surface temperature right now is reading at almost 112 degrees. When we checked the outdoor temperature, the outdoor temperature right now is 86 degrees. So if you think about it, we’ve opened this door a couple of times, and it’s still 112 degrees.”

Streitmatter’s take-home: it’s just not worth it. As a mother of young kids, she admits that wrestling kids into a grocery store or dry cleaner isn’t always convenient. The alternative, however, could be something that causes serious injury to your child, or could even be deadly.

If you see a child who has been left inside a hot car, don’t hesitate to call 911.

For more information about injury prevention programs at OSF HealthCare Children’s Hospital of Illinois, click [here](#).