



State of North Carolina
Department of Health and Human Services

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Don't leave kids in hot cars

RALEIGH – Hot weather, hot cars and kids are a dangerous and potentially deadly combination. But with a little bit of care, common sense, and car safety, child fatalities in hot cars is easily one of the most preventable causes of death. At the start of the summer, the North Carolina Division of Child Development wants all parents, childcare givers, and summer camp staff to keep a sharp eye on the temperature and the kids when vehicles are involved.

"Most people don't realize how fast a car interior can heat up. A quick trip to the grocery store or a stop on the way to the beach can turn into a family tragedy in a matter of minutes," said DCD Director Peggy Ball. "Some folks think it is okay to leave a child alone for a few minutes, but it is not. Even with the windows cracked, it can take just a few minutes for interior temperatures to go from comfortable to hot enough to fry an egg."

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, Ball said. Last year, 25 children died in heat-related car deaths nationwide, according to the National Safe Kids Campaign.

"In heat stroke, children can no longer sweat. Their body temperatures rise to deadly levels leading to severe damage to the brain, liver and kidneys, or even death. When you leave the vehicle make sure that you haven't left a child behind," she explained. "You also need to make certain that empty cars are locked so young children can't wander into them and become trapped."

That's why Peggy Ball says that with a little bit of care, common sense and car safety, you and your family can enjoy the bright sunshine and hot days that mark summer weather.

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