



WASHINGTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

333 E. Washington St., Suite 1100
PO Box 2003
West Bend, WI 53095-2003

Phone: 262-335-4462

Fax: 262-335-4705

www.co.washington.wi.us/chn

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Contact: Linda Walter, MS, Health Officer

Jennifer Arvidson, RN, Public Health Nurse

262-306-2231

WASHINGTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT WARNS ABOUT THE RISKS OF HEATSTROKE

As outside temperatures rise, the dangers for children being seriously injured or even dying from being left alone inside a hot car also rise. That's why the Washington County Health Department has joined with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in an effort to reduce these deaths by reminding parents and caregivers about the dangers of heatstroke in young children.

"More than half of all vehicle-related heatstroke deaths in children are caused by a child accidentally being left in the car, and more than 30 percent are from a child getting into a hot car on their own," said Linda Walter, Washington County Health Officer "In an effort to prevent these needless tragedies, we want to urge all parents and caregivers to do three things:

- 1) NEVER leave a child in a vehicle unattended;
- 2) Make it a habit to look in the backseat EVERY time you exit the car;
- 3) ALWAYS lock the car and put the keys out of reach. And, if you ever see a child left alone in a hot vehicle, call 911 right away.

According to NHTSA, heatstroke is the leading cause of non-crash vehicle fatalities for children 14 and under. In fact, one child dies from heatstroke nearly every 10 days from being left in a hot vehicle.

Warning signs of heatstroke include: red, hot, and moist or dry skin, no sweating, a strong rapid pulse or a slow weak pulse, nausea, confusion or acting strangely. If a child exhibits any of these signs after being in a hot vehicle, cool the child rapidly (not an ice bath but by spraying them with cool water or with a garden hose). Call 911 or you local emergency number immediately.

“Children’s body temperatures can rise up to five times faster than that of an adult, and heatstroke can occur in temperatures as low as 57 degrees,” said Walter. “On an 80 degree day, a car can reach deadly levels in just 10 minutes.”

NHTSA and the Washington County Health Department want to remind everyone of a few key safety tips to prevent deadly accidents and to prevent vehicular heatstroke:

- Never leave an infant or child unattended in a vehicle, even if the windows are partly open, or the engine is running and the air conditioning is on;
- Don’t let children play in an unattended vehicle. Teach them a vehicle is not a play area;
- Make a habit of looking in the vehicle - front and back - before locking the door and walking away;
- Take steps to remember not to leave a child in a vehicle:
 - Write yourself a note and place it where you’ll see it when you leave the vehicle.
 - Place your purse, briefcase, or something else you’re sure to need in the back seat so you’ll be sure to see a child left in the vehicle.
 - Keep an object in the car seat, such as a stuffed toy. Once the child is buckled in, place the object where the driver will notice it when he or she leaves the vehicle;
 - Always lock vehicle doors and trunks and keep keys out of children’s reach. If a child is missing, check the vehicle first, including the trunk.
 - Ask your childcare center to call you if your child doesn’t arrive on time for childcare.
 - If you see a child alone in a hot vehicle, call 911 or your local emergency number immediately. Follow the dispatcher’s instructions.

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