



Media Alert

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MIEMSS Warns About the Risks of Heatstroke in Children National Heat Stroke Awareness Day is May 25

As outside temperatures rise, the dangers for children being seriously injured or even dying from being left alone inside a hot car also rise. The Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS), the State agency responsible for the delivery of emergency medical services in Maryland, has joined with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and Safe Kids World Wide 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 unintentionally being left in the car, and more than 30 percent are from a child getting into a hot car on their own,” said Robert R. Bass, MD, Executive Director of MIEMSS.

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 can include red, hot, and moist or dry skin, lack of sweating, a strong rapid pulse or a slow weak pulse, nausea, and confusion or acting strangely. If a child exhibits any of these signs after being in a hot vehicle, cool the child rapidly by spraying them with cool water or with a garden hose. Do NOT put the child in an ice bath. Call 9-1-1 immediately.

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

MIEMSS and Safe Kids Maryland want to join NHTSA and Safe Kids World Wide to remind everyone of a few key safety tips to prevent deadly incidents and vehicular heatstroke in children:

- NEVER leave a child in a vehicle unattended, even if the windows are partly open or the engine is running and the air conditioning is on. NLYCA – Never Leave Your Child Alone in a Car resource materials are available from Safe Kids World Wide and local coalitions.

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- Be sure that all occupants leave the vehicle when unloading, don't overlook a sleeping infant or young child.
- Don't let children play in an unattended vehicle. Teach them that a vehicle is not a play area.
- Always lock vehicle doors and trunks and keep keys out of children's reach. If a child is missing, check vehicles first, including the trunk.
- Take these 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.
 - Set the alarm on your cell phone or computer calendar as reminder to drop your child off at daycare.
 - 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 you will notice it when you leave the vehicle.
 - Load a reminder on your smart phone (iTunes has a Baby Reminder free app)
- Ask your childcare center to call you if your child doesn't arrive on time.
- Make "look before you leave" a routine whenever you get out of any vehicle.
- If you see a child alone in a hot vehicle, call 9-1-1 immediately. If they are in distress due to heat, get them out as quickly as possible. Cool the child rapidly (not in an ice bath, but by spraying them with cool water or with a garden hose). ACT – Avoid heat stroke, Create reminders and habits, and Take Action information is on the Safe Kids World Wide website.

Safe Kids coalitions and chapters across Maryland will be educating families on the dangers of kids left alone in cars through the spring and summer. Interactive displays show how quickly a vehicle heats up with a thermometer inside and out side the vehicle.

For additional information on Heat Stroke Awareness Day and keeping kids safe in cars, visit NHTSA's "Parents Central" site at <http://www.safercar.gov/parents/Home.htm> and Safe Kids World Wide "Buckle Up" site at <http://www.safekids.org/safety-basics/safety-guide/kids-in-and-around-cars/>.

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