

Prevent children's deaths in hot cars

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS EVERYWHERE

On average, 37 children die every year from being left in hot cars. More than half are younger than 2.

More than half of these deaths happen because of sheer forgetfulness. The baby falls asleep, and the parent or caregiver gets distracted. Forgetfulness has become more common since child car seats began facing the rear in the back seat.

A CAR IS LIKE A METAL BOX.

More than a quarter of the deaths occur when a child accidentally locks himself in the car. This can happen because a curious child gets inside and plays with the child-lock feature.

Summer is an especially dangerous time because a car is like a metal box. It can heat up to an internal temperature of 150 degrees in a matter of minutes. What's more, a child's body heats up three to five times faster than adult's. When the body temperature reaches 104 degrees, heat stroke occurs.

Cracking or opening windows doesn't help. Heat builds up just as fast inside. And the outside temperature doesn't have to be sizzling. Deaths have occurred when temperatures hovered in the 80s and below.

Don't let your child become a tragic statistic.

- Leave a cell phone, purse, wallet, or something else you need in the back seat when you get behind the wheel. This can force you to look there before you get out of the car.
- Put a toy in the empty child seat. When a child is in the seat, move the toy to the front seat to remind you that a child is in the back.

- When your car is parked, lock the doors. Keep car keys and remote door openers out of children's reach.
- Never leave a child unattended in a car, regardless of the weather or your desire not to wake up a sleeping child. You may think that picking up your cleaning will take only a minute or two, but you never know when you may have to wait in line or run into a friend.
- Keep a stroller or baby carrier handy in your car to make it easier to take the child with you.
- Slow down. Reschedule errands, or ask a friend or neighbor to babysit to avoid leaving the child unattended in a car.
- If you see a child alone inside a car, call 9-1-1.

For more information, see

Andrews, Travis M.. July 25, 2016. Two more children died over the weekend in hot cars. That's 682 since 1998. It isn't getting better. *The Washington Post*. www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/07/25/two-children-died-over-the-weekend-in-hot-cars-thats-682-since-1998-it-isnt-getting-better/.

KidsAndCars.org, www.kidsandcars.org/.

Null, Jan. May 31, 2017. Heatstroke Deaths of Children in Vehicles, <http://noheatstroke.org/> (with support of the National Safety Council).

Smith, Mark David. April 28, 2017. Texas leads nation in child heatstroke deaths; U.S. numbers up from last year. Fort Worth Star-Telegram, www.star-telegram.com/news/local/community/fort-worth/article147478134.html. ■

What are your responsibilities to your child care provider?

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Choosing the right center-based or home-based provider is a huge responsibility. The choice can strongly influence your child's health and well-being. Ideally you will choose a regulated program that has well-trained staff who use positive guidance techniques and offer safe and enriching activities.

But your responsibilities don't end there.

- Furnish the requested information, such as who to contact in an emergency, which immunizations your child has received, and whether your child has any dietary or medical needs.
- Inform the provider about who will pick up the child—a grandmother, boyfriend, or neighbor, for example, and update this information if your situation changes. The provider should not release the child unless you have given permission for a specific person.
- Read the documents the provider gives you. Be sure to understand policies such as hours of operation, holidays and vacations, illness that may require keeping a child at home, and the provider's strategies for guiding child behavior. If you're unclear about something, ask.
- Pay promptly. If you know you will be late in paying, inform the program's director. Child care programs operate on a tight budget, with labor costs as high as 85 percent of the monthly operating expenses. Advance notice can help the director plan for the contingency.
- Communicate daily with your child's caregiver. Stay informed about the child's eating, play, toileting, and interaction with other children. Remember that you and the caregiver are partners in your child's care, and a good relationship is best for your child.
- Participate in the program's activities, if possible. Attend parent-teacher conferences in person or by electronic means, volunteer in the classroom, help

improve the play yard, or share your talents and resources in other ways as needed. Your participation might include anything from buying a new computer for the program to donating recyclable materials such as plastic jugs that children will use in learning activities, for example.

- Drop in unannounced occasionally. Spend your lunch hour with your child. Note whether children are supervised, conditions are safe and sanitary, and children are happy and engaged.
- Talk with your child about the day. Ask such questions as: What did you do? Who did you play with? What did you eat for lunch and snack? What did you like best? Be careful to listen and not lecture.
- If you observe something that worries you or you're concerned that your child doesn't like the program, talk with the child's caregiver or the program director. You may find that it's a simple misunderstanding, or you may uncover a valid problem that needs attention.

How you handle these responsibilities can develop into a habit of involvement in your child's education through high school. Research shows that parent involvement can mean fewer behavioral problems in school and more academic success. And it can also deepen the caring relationship you have with your child.

Note: If you suspect that children are not safe, call the local licensing office. In Texas, find the local office at www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Local_Child_Care_Licensing_Offices/default.asp.

If your child or any child shows signs of abuse or neglect, call 9-1-1 or the state child abuse registry. In Texas, call 1-800-252-5400. For other states, see www.dfps.state.tx.us/Background_Checks/documents/Out_of_State_Abuse_Neglect_Requests_Resources.pdf. ■

Quality fathering matters to daughters

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS EVERYWHERE

A new study has found that if daughters communicated well with their fathers and felt close to them, the girls were less likely to engage in risky behavior as teens.

The study, reported by the University of Utah in May, investigated families with two daughters (at least four years apart), in which the parents had either remained together or had broken up by the time the younger daughter turned 14.

The results indicate that different amounts of high quality or low quality time that fathers spend with their daughters affect the supervision they receive and the friends with whom they associate. Research has shown that low parental supervision—knowing what a child is doing, who she hangs out with, and how she spends her time and money—is associated with increased drug and alcohol use, delinquency, and other behavior problems.

In disrupted families, the father's behavior affected the older daughter much more than the younger

because the older daughter had longer exposure to the father's behavior, for better or worse. This doesn't mean that divorced or separated dads will have a negative influence. The key is the quality of the dad's relationship with his daughter.

Psychologists have long believed that family instability, which is different than divorce, can harm children's development. For girls, this study indicates that fathers play a critical role.

"There is a lot of emphasis on the effects of divorce and parental separation on children," said Danielle DelPriore, the study's lead researcher, "but this research shows that what may be more important, at least in this case, is what dad is doing while he is in the home."

The results imply that if parents want to buffer their daughters against risky behavior, they would do well to improve their parenting and communication skills.

For more information, see:

Konner, Melvin. (June 3, 2017). The link between detached dads and risk-taking girls. *The Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 2017, www.wsj.com/articles/the-link-between-distant-dads-and-risk-taking-girls-1496414606.

Study of sisters helps explain dad's influence on risky sexual behavior, University of Utah, May 15, 2017, <https://unews.utah.edu/study-of-sisters-helps-explain-dads-influence-on-risky-sexual-behavior/>. ■

PHOTO BY SUSAN GAETZ



Leave the park better than you found it

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS EVERYWHERE

When you visit parks for a picnic, birthday party, or other event, clean up any mess you've created. Toss paper plates, decorations, and leftover food in a trash bin, and recycle plastic bottles and cans. Or take the trash with you to dispose at home.

Your cleanup has many benefits:

- It demonstrates to your children how to be a good citizen.
- It saves tax dollars.
- It leaves the park clean for visitors who come after you.
- It lessens residue that can attract varmints and insects. ■