



Winter Safety Tips for Children

The dangers of winter coats and car seats How to keep your child warm and safe

As the coldest part of winter approaches, parents bring out their child's bulky winter coats to keep children warm during vehicle travel. However, thick winter coats can reduce the safety of the child's car seat. All coats and clothing will compress in a crash, but thicker winter coats can compress enough to create significant slack in the harness. The car seat harness keeps the child secure in the car seat and must be snug on the child's body to provide the best protection in a crash.

Here are some steps you can use to determine if the child's coat is too bulky and not safe to use under the harness while traveling in the car:



- Put the coat on the child and secure the child in the car seat. Fasten and adjust the harness to snugly fit the child. A snug harness does not allow the webbing to be folded between your thumb and forefinger when pinched at the shoulder.
- Without loosening the harness, unbuckle and remove the child from the car seat.
- Remove the coat and place the child back in the car seat. Buckle the harness straps. If you can pinch the webbing between your thumb and forefinger, the coat is too bulky to be worn under the harness.

Keep Children Warm and Safe

When a child's winter coat can not be safely worn under the harness in the car seat, here are some tips to keep the child safe and warm during travel.

- Infants: dress child in warm clothing and buckle in the car seat. Place a blanket over the child to keep them warm.
- For older children, secure the child in the car seat, turn their coat around and put it on backward with their arms through the sleeves and the back of the coat acting like a blanket.
- If possible, warm up the car before children are secured in the vehicle.
- Select a winter coat that is warm but is not bulky and allows the harness to correctly fit the child.

Note: A common misuse for car seats is a loose harness. Wearing a bulky winter coat under the harness is just one of the causes for a loose harness. Extra slack in the harness can be very dangerous; it can lead to too much forward movement or even ejection during a crash.

Tips for installing a car seat properly. If a car seat is not installed correctly, your child's safety could be in danger. Because every car seat and vehicle is different, it's important to follow all instructions carefully. Here are key items to keep in mind when installing a car seat.

Installing the Car Seat:

- ◆ **Read the car seat instruction manual and the portion of your vehicle's owner's manual on car seat installation.** Every car seat needs to be installed using either the lower anchors of the LATCH system or the seat belt to secure the car seat in place. If you choose to use a seat belt to install the car seat, the vehicle owner's manual provides information on how to lock the seat belt.
- ◆ Place the car seat in the back seat of your vehicle and follow the car seat manufacturer's installation directions.
- ◆ Secure the car seat tightly in the vehicle. It should not move side-to-side or front-to-back more than 1 inch when pulled at the belt path.
- ◆ Install the rear-facing car seat at the correct recline angle. Most car seats have built in angle indicators or adjusters to help you determine the correct angle.
- ◆ Install the forward-facing car seat and secure the top tether strap to the tether anchor and tighten. Use the top tether when installing the car seat with the LATCH lower anchors or the seat belt. This step is very important as it limits forward head movement in a crash.



Fitting Your Child Correctly in the Car Seat:

- ◆ Properly position the harness on your child.
 - ◆ Rear-facing: The harness straps should lie flat and be threaded through the slot that is at or below your child's shoulders.
 - ◆ Forward-facing: The harness straps should lie flat and be threaded through the reinforced slot that is at or above your child's shoulders.
- ◆ Buckle the harness and close the chest clip. Tighten the harness until it is snug on the child.
 - ◆ The harness is snug when the webbing cannot be pinched at the shoulder.
- ◆ Make sure the chest clip is at armpit level.

Leaving Kids Alone in Hot Cars — Know the Risks and Consequences

Prevent Vehicle Related 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. Heatstroke begins when the core body temperature reaches about 104 degrees and the thermoregulatory system is overwhelmed. Kids and hot cars are a deadly combination.

Vehicles heat up quickly - even with a window rolled down two inches, if the outside temperature is in the low 80s° Fahrenheit, the temperature inside a vehicle can reach deadly levels in only 10 minutes. Children's bodies overheat easily, and infants and children under four years of age are among those at greatest risk for heat-related illness.

Children's bodies absorb more heat on a hot day than an adult. Also, children are less able to lower their body heat by sweating. When a body cannot sweat enough, the body temperature rises rapidly. In fact, when left in a hot vehicle, a young child's body temperature may increase three to five times as fast as an adult. High body temperatures can cause permanent injury or even death.

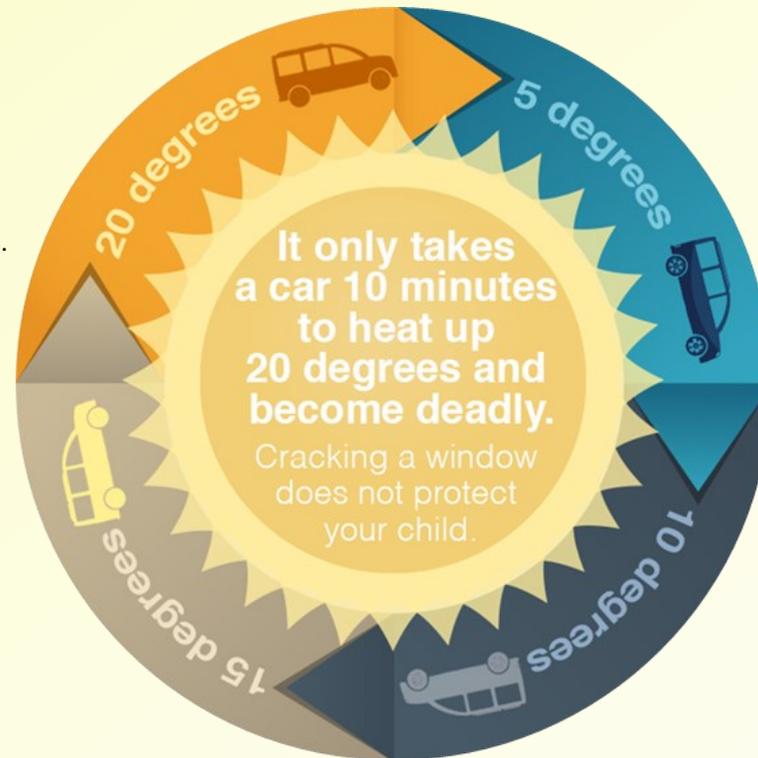
Risks

- ◆ In 10 minutes, a car can heat up **20 degrees Fahrenheit.**
- ◆ Cracking a window **does little to keep the car cool.**
- ◆ With temperatures in the 60s, your car can heat up to **well above 110 degrees.**
- ◆ A child's body temperature can rise up to **five times faster** than an adult's.
- ◆ Heatstroke can happen when the temperature is **as low as 57 degrees outside!**
- ◆ A child dies when his/her temperature **reaches 107.**

Warning signs of heatstroke include:

- ◆ Red, hot, and moist or dry skin
- ◆ No sweating
- ◆ Strong rapid pulse or a slow weak pulse
- ◆ Nausea

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). Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately.



Prevention Tips to Avoid a Tragic Heatstroke

- ◆ Never leave a child alone in a car.
- ◆ Never let your kids play in an unattended vehicle. Teach them that a vehicle is not a play area.
- ◆ Never leave infants or children in a parked vehicle, even if the windows are partially open.
- ◆ Place your purse, briefcase, cell phone, or something you will need in the back seat so you will be sure to see a child left in the vehicle.
- ◆ Keep a large teddy bear or other stuffed animal in the car seat when it is empty. Move the item to the front seat when you place the child in the car seat as a visual reminder.
- ◆ If you are dropping your children off at childcare, but normally your spouse or partner drops them off, have them call you to make sure they were not left in the car.
- ◆ Become vigilant about looking in the vehicle before locking the door. Always look front and back before walking away — always!



<http://www.safercar.gov/parents/heatstroke.htm>