Babies and young children can sometimes be so quiet in the vehicle that we forget that they are in there with us. It may even be tempting to leave a child alone in a car while we quickly run an errand. The problem is that leaving a child alone in a car can lead to serious injury or death from heatstroke. Heatstroke, also known as hyperthermia, is the leading cause of non-crash, vehicle-related deaths for children. Young children are especially at risk as their body heats up three to five times faster than an adult’s.¹

The Facts

- Since 1998, over 662 children have died from heatstroke when unattended in a vehicle in the US.²
  - 54% of children forgotten by caregiver
  - 29% child playing in unattended vehicle
  - 17% child intentionally left in vehicle by adult
  - 1% unknown
- When a child’s internal temperature gets to 104 degrees, major organs begin to shut down. Once the child’s temperature reaches 107 degrees, the child can die.
- Cars heat up quickly – 19 degrees in 10 minutes.
- Even moderate weather can be dangerous. If the outside temperature is 60 degrees, the temperature inside the car can reach 110 degrees.¹

Tips

- Create reminders so children are not forgotten in the vehicle
  - Place your purse, bag, or phone in the back seat
  - Place a doll or teddy bear in the car seat when the child isn’t in the vehicle and move it to the front passenger seat when the child is in the vehicle
  - Use window clings or stickers on the driver’s side window
- Develop a plan with your daycare so they know to call you if baby doesn’t show up or they don’t hear from you
- Teach kids not to play in cars and always keep your vehicles locked to prevent them from doing so.¹

ACT

A: AVOID heatstroke-related injury and death by never leaving your child alone in a car and make sure your vehicle is always locked.

C: CREATE reminders by putting something in the back of your car next to your child such as a briefcase, purse or cell phone.

T: TAKE action. If you see a child alone in a car, call 911 immediately. One call could save a life.¹

Sources:

1. Safe Kids Worldwide
2. Dept. of Meteorology and Climate Science, San Jose State University. Updated January 15, 2016