



## MID-MICHIGAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Your public health team, connecting with our communities to achieve healthier outcomes

Submitted by: Leslie Kinnee, Public Information Officer  
615 N. State St., Stanton, MI 48888-9702  
989-831-3669, [kinnee@mmdhd.org](mailto:kinnee@mmdhd.org)

[www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org)



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### **A hot car is no place for a child or pet**

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- Sitting in a hot car for just ten minutes can be unbearable, but when summer temperatures soar, it can be more than uncomfortable, it can be dangerous and deadly.

That's why it's so important for everyone to understand just how quickly the temperature inside an enclosed car can rise and how it can impact the occupants inside.

The temperature inside a car can increase twenty degrees in as little as ten minutes, thirty degrees after twenty minutes and can ultimately double the temperature outside.

This scenario is dangerous for anyone, but especially for children, whose body heats up three to five times faster than an adult's, making them more susceptible to heatstroke.

Heat stroke occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature: the body's temperature rises rapidly, the sweating mechanism fails, and the body is unable to cool down. Body temperature can rise to 106 degrees or higher within just ten to fifteen minutes, which can lead to permanent disability and even death.

Even on a relatively cool day, the temperature inside a car can quickly spike to life threatening levels if the sun is out.

To help prevent tragedy from occurring, follow these simple steps:

- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute.
- Make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.
- Create reminders by putting something in the back of your car that is needed at your final destination, like a work bag, purse or cell phone. This is especially important when not following your normal routine.
- Create a calendar reminder for your electronic devices to make sure you dropped your child off at daycare.
- Make sure to lock your vehicle, including doors and trunk, when you're not using it. Keep keys and remote entry fobs out of children's sight and reach.
- Teach kids that trunks are for transporting cargo and are not safe places to play.
- If you see or hear a child alone in a car, call 911. One call could save a life.

Pets are just as susceptible to heat stroke as children, so never leave them in a parked car when things heat up... not even with the windows partway down, not even in the shade, not even for a quick errand. Dogs and cats can't sweat like humans, so they pant to lower their body temperature. If they're inside the car, recycling hot air, panting gives no relief, and heat stroke can occur very quickly.

So the next time you're tempted to leave your child or pet in the car, just for a few minutes while you run into the store, remember that a few minutes is all it takes for tragedy to strike.

*Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.*

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