

Fact Sheet

During an Australia summer, a parked car can quickly become dangerously hot, reaching over 30°C hotter than the air outside.

Once a car is parked, the heat can rise quickly, and there is very little you can do to prevent it. Even having the car window open makes minimal difference to the internal cabin temperature. For example, having the window open by 2.5cm would only reduce the temperature by approximately 3°C¹.

Parked cars can get very hot quickly, it is important that you never leave a child unattended in a car.

Dangers of leaving children in cars

Leaving children unattended in the car, even for a short time, can be fatal. Here are some of the risks involved:

- Children are more sensitive to heat than adults, and tend to feel the effects of heat much more rapidly.
- In a parked car the temperature and humidity rises, while the airflow decreases. This could lead to dehydration and other health risks.
- A child may also become distressed and try to get out of their restraint; this may also increase the risk of strangulation from the harness.

The law

Under Western Australia's Children and Community Services Act 2004, Part 4, Division 7, Subdivision 1, it is an offence for a person responsible for a child to leave them alone in a car without proper supervision if this places the child at risk:

- A. the child becomes or is likely to become emotionally distressed; or
- B. the child's health becomes or is likely to become permanently or temporarily impaired;

This is a criminal offence and can result up to 5 years imprisonment.



1. Dadour I.R., Almanjahie I., Fowkes N.D., Keady G., Vijayan K. Temperature variations in a parked vehicle. FORENSIC SCI INT [Internet]. 2011 [cited 2016 February 23]; 207 (1-3):pp. 205-211. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.forsciint.2010.10.009>

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Reducing the risks

- Never leave children unattended in a car.
- Plan quick jobs for times when you don't have children with you.
- Seek service stations offering pay at the pump.
- Dress children accordingly, and check that the harness still fits the child correctly. Children wearing lightweight clothing may need their harness tightened.
- Use a visor or sunshade on car windows. Avoid using a hood on rearward facing restraints as this will decrease airflow around baby's head.
- Plan journeys for the cooler hours of the day.
- Provide plenty of cool fluids – preferably water.
- Seek shady areas to stop or park your car, to reduce the amount of the direct sunlight hitting your car.
- Ensure cars are locked and the keys are out of reach of children to prevent children gaining access to the car.
- Always check the car before you leave it.
- Cool your car down as much as possible before putting the child in the car.



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