Hot Weather Warning

Check your car for kids.

June 3, 2019 By Kate Ferguson

Last year, in Moraga, a town in the San Francisco Bay Area, a 19-month old toddler was accidentally left in a parked car for several hours by a family member. The child died of heatstroke caused by the nearly 130-degree temperature inside the vehicle, according to news reports.

Research shows that the amount of time a youngster spends in excessive heat can raise his or her temperature to above normal and trigger hyperthermia, a life-threatening condition that may result in organ failure and death if left untreated.

Although many people may not understand how someone may forget a child in a hot car, “the human brain is flawed,” says David M. Diamond, PhD, a neuroscientist and professor of psychology at the University of South Florida, and a noted expert on memory.

Diamond says that while driving, an adult’s brain may switch into an auto-pilot mode that doesn’t include the child. “It actually happened to me,” he reveals. “I was very fortunate that my wife was there to remind me that the child was there. I never would have thought that I could have left a child in a car.”

Diamond says the first step to help prevent children from dying of heatstroke in vehicles is for parents to accept that this tragedy could happen to anyone.

Additionally, leaving an important item, like a purse or a phone, in the backseat could help remind caregivers that a child is strapped in there.

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