

Heat Safety Risk Alert

PHILADELPHIA COORDINATED HEALTH CARE

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Please visit any of the following
websites for additional information:

[www.parenthood.com/article-topics/
summer-car-safety.html](http://www.parenthood.com/article-topics/summer-car-safety.html)

[www.weather.com/outlook/wxready/
articles/id-68](http://www.weather.com/outlook/wxready/articles/id-68)

www.cdc.gov



*Enhancing Access to Community
Health Care*

Please visit us on our
website at www.pchc.org



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Enhancing Access to Community Health Care

Southeastern PA Health Care Quality Unit



**A car parked in
direct sunlight can
reach 131-171°F
in 15 min!**

Source:

National SAFE KIDS, 1999.

It's hard to ignore the fact that the Southeast Region of Pennsylvania is experiencing one of the hottest summers on record with Philadelphia claiming the 2nd hottest July and six confirmed heat waves thus far. And we're only half-way through the summer...

It's vital to remember the potential dangers of heat in cars. Moving or parked, heat in cars poses a constant threat to the health and safety of people. When it's hot outside the temperature in a car interior can reach dangerous and sometimes fatal levels in a matter of minutes.

Keep in mind that a car is basically a metal box. The hot sun can turn this metal box into an oven. Nobody would ever consider leaving someone in an oven. When the outside temperature is 93 degrees Fahrenheit, the temperatures inside a car can reach 125 degrees in just 20 minutes and 140 degrees in 40 minutes even if a window is cracked open. A car parked in direct sunlight can reach 131- 172 degrees Fahrenheit, even after only fifteen minutes. At that temperature it only takes a matter of minutes for people to die or suffer permanent disability.

(North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, 1999)

Whenever a heat advisory or warning has been issued, please ensure that the following recommendations are being fulfilled for people you support:

- Never leave anyone in a parked car!
- Know people! If they have had a history of heat-related illness, they are at risk for future incidents.
- Develop and institute heat safety checks for high-risk people (those who use medications, have medical conditions, may be dependent on others for fluids/ food, communication limitations) or those who live alone or have limited hours of support.
- Stay indoors and avoid extreme temperature changes. If the home does not have air conditioning, suggest going to a shopping mall, movies or public library -- even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat.

Heat Safety Risk Alert (continued)

- If air conditioning is not available, stay on the lowest floor out of the sunshine and keep electric fans running but remember to keep the door or window open to the outside. While fans do NOT cool air, they move the air around and keep you cool by evaporating your sweat.
- Drink cool liquids often, particularly water, even if you do not feel thirsty, to help your body stay cool. Avoid alcoholic beverages, which dehydrate the body. During heavy exercise in a hot environment, drink two to four glasses (16-32 ounces) of cool fluids each hour.
- Eat small, frequent meals. Avoid foods that are high in protein, which increase metabolic heat.
- If you must go out, wear lightweight, light-colored clothing to reflect the sun's energy.
- Slow down, avoid strenuous outdoor activity. If you must engage in strenuous activity, limit exposure during mid-day hours.
- Cover all exposed skin with a high SPF sunscreen, and wear a wide-brimmed hat to protect your face and head.
- Drink plenty of fluids even after sun exposure.
- Cool the person in a tub of cool water, cool shower, or sponge the person with cool water.
- Know the symptoms of heat disorders and overexposure to the sun, and be ready to give first aid treatment. [Source: CDC]

Sources:

www.parenthood.com/article-topics/summer_car_safety.html
www.weather.com/outlook/wxready/articles/id-68

Each year the City of Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Mental Retardation Services releases their Heat Safety Policy. This policy and accompanying information is extremely important to review with individuals diagnosed with intellectual/developmental disabilities and anyone involved in providing supports. Please contact PCHC if you would like information on how to obtain a copy.

PCHC has also addressed heat safety issues in numerous summer editions of the Health Care Alerts which are available on the website: www.pchc.org in the Documents Section under Newsletters.

The Summer 2009 edition can be accessed at:
<http://www.pchc.org/Documents/Newsletters/Current-HCAs/HCA-40-Summer2009.pdf>.



Temperature inside a car
After 20 min. - 125°F
After 40 min. - 140°F
**when it is 93°F outside*

Source:
North Carolina Department
of Health and Human
Services, 1999.