



Keeping Kids Warm & Safe Through Winter

The Danger of Winter Coats in Car Seats

As cooler weather approaches, parents bundle children in bulky coats to keep them warm. Using these thick coats may keep children warm, but they reduce the safety of their car seat. The car seat harness keeps the child in the car seat and spreads the crash forces over a large area of the body. The harness provides the best protection when correctly placed on the child and tightened snugly. A bulky coat can compress in a crash and create slack in the harness.



To determine if the child's coat is too bulky and not safe to use under the harness while traveling in the car:

1. Put the coat on the child and correctly place the car seat harness on the child's body. Secure the harness and adjust snugly to fit the child. A snug harness does not allow the webbing to be folded between your thumb and forefinger when pinched at the shoulder.
2. Without loosening the harness, unbuckle and remove the child from the car seat.
3. Remove the coat and place the child back in the car seat. Correctly place the harness on the child's body and buckle the harness straps. If you can pinch the webbing between your thumb and forefinger, the coat is too bulky to be worn under the harness.



Winter Coats and Harnessing

What you **CAN** Do

- ◆ Purchase coats that come in layers or offer warmth with thinner fabrics and fillers.
- ◆ Place a blanket over the child who is secured in a car seat for additional warmth.
- ◆ Put the child's coat on backwards once the harness is buckled and tightened in the car.
 - ◆ Secure the child in the car seat with the clothes that will be worn while indoors.
 - ◆ Buckle and tighten the harness snugly. A snug harness does not allow any slack. It lies in a relatively straight line without pressing on the child's body and pushing it into an unnatural position. The harness should be snug enough on the child that you cannot pinch any extra webbing.
 - ◆ Slip the child's arms through the sleeves to wear the coat backwards and over the snug harness.
 - ◆ In the event of a crash, the snug harness will keep the child secure.
- ◆ Warm up the car in a well-ventilated area prior to taking the child outside.

What you **SHOULD NOT** Do

- ◆ Purchase and use puffy coats, buntings and snowsuits or too much padding under the harness.
- ◆ Use head roll supports that do not come with the car seat (non-regulated). These items can actually interfere with the harness, add padding under the child and affect how the car seat protects in a crash.
- ◆ Use car seat covers that cover the entire car seat for warmth and decoration. Unless the car seat cover comes with the car seat, it should not be used in the car during travel.

Note: A common misuse for car seats is a loose harness. Wearing a bulky winter coat under the harness is just one of the causes for a loose harness. Extra slack in the harness can be very dangerous; it can lead to too much forward movement or even ejection during a crash.



Following Manufacturer's Instructions

Install the child's car seat correctly to reduce the risk of injury in a crash. It is important to follow the car seat and vehicle instructions carefully to achieve a correct installation. Useful tips to obtain a correct installation:

- ◆ **Read the car seat instruction manual and the portion of your vehicle owner's manual covering car seat installation.**
- ◆ Place the car seat in a back seat of the vehicle and secure it tightly. It should not move side-to-side or front-to-back more than 1-inch when pulled at the belt path.

Secure Children Correctly In the Car Seat

- ◆ Properly position the harness on your child.
- ◆ **Rear-facing:** The harness straps should lie flat and be threaded through the slot that is **at or below** your child's shoulders.
- ◆ **Forward-facing:** The harness straps should lie flat and be threaded through the **reinforced slot** that is **at or above** your child's shoulders.
- ◆ Buckle the harness and secure the chest clip. Tighten the harness until it is snug on the child.
 - ◆ The harness is snug when the webbing cannot be pinched at the shoulder.
 - ◆ Make sure the chest clip on the harness is at armpit level.

Leaving Children Alone in Hot Cars — Know the Risks and Consequences

Prevent Vehicle Related Heatstroke!

As outside temperatures rise, the danger for children being seriously injured or even dying from being left alone inside a hot car also rises. No one thinks they could forget a child in their vehicle, but these tragedies happen. Heatstroke begins when the core body temperature reaches about 104 degrees and the ability to maintain or control body temperature is overwhelmed.

Children and Hot Cars are a Deadly Combination!

Vehicles heat up quickly and children's bodies overheat easily, Infants and children under four years of age are among those at greatest risk for heat-related illness.

Children's bodies absorb more heat on a hot day than an adult and children are less able to lower their body heat by sweating. When a body cannot sweat enough, the body temperature rises rapidly. In fact, when left in a hot vehicle, a young child's body temperature may increase three to five times as fast as an adult.

High body temperatures can cause permanent injury or even death.

Estimated Vehicle Interior Air Temperature v. Elapsed Time

ELAPSED TIME	OUTSIDE Air Temperature					
	70	75	80	85	90	95
0 minutes	70	75	80	85	90	95
10 minutes	89	94	99	104	109	114
20 minutes	99	104	109	114	119	124
30 minutes	104	109	114	119	124	129
40 minutes	108	113	118	123	128	133
50 minutes	111	116	121	126	131	136
60 minutes	113	118	123	128	133	138

Courtesy Jan Null, CCM; Department of Meteorology & Climate Science, San Jose State University

Risks

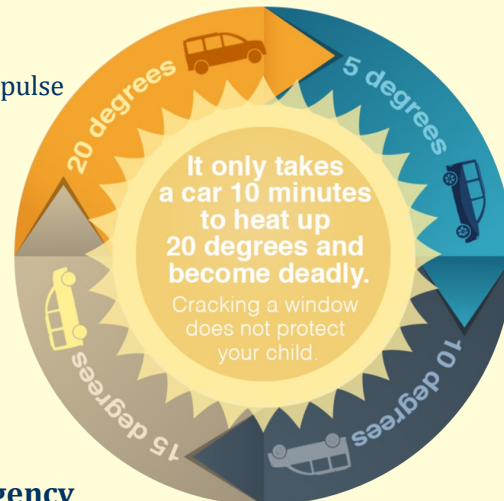
- ◆ In 10 minutes, a car can heat up **20 degrees Fahrenheit**.
- ◆ Cracking a window **does little to keep the car cool**.
- ◆ With temperatures in the 60s, your car can heat up to **well above 110 degrees**.
- ◆ A child's body temperature can rise up to **five times faster** than an adult's body temperature.
- ◆ Heatstroke can happen when the temperature is **as low as 57 degrees outside!**
- ◆ A child dies when his/her temperature **reaches 107 degrees**.



Warning signs of heatstroke include:

- ◆ Red, hot, and moist or dry skin
- ◆ No sweating
- ◆ Strong rapid pulse or slow weak pulse
- ◆ Nausea
- ◆ Confusion, or acting strangely

If a child exhibits any of these signs after being in a hot vehicle, cool the child rapidly. Do Not place child in an ice bath but by spraying the child with cool water.



Take Action:

Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately

Prevention Tips to Avoid a Tragic Heatstroke

- ◆ **ALWAYS LOOK BEFORE YOU LOCK!**
- ◆ Always check the back seat before you lock the vehicle and walk away.
- ◆ Get in the habit of always opening the back door to check the back seat before leaving a vehicle. Put something you will need like your cell phone, handbag, or briefcase, etc., in the back seat to create a reminder to open the back door to retrieve that item every time you park.
- ◆ Keep a large stuffed animal in the child's car seat. When the child is placed in the car seat, put the stuffed animal in the front passenger seat as a visual reminder that the child is in the back seat.
- ◆ **Distractions and/or a change in routine increase the risk of forgetting a child in a back seat.** If someone else is driving your child, or your daily routine is altered, always check to make sure your child has arrived safely.
- ◆ Have a strict policy in place with the childcare provider about morning drop-off.
 - ◆ If your child will not be attending childcare as scheduled, the parent's responsibility is to call and inform the childcare provider.
 - ◆ If the child does not show up as scheduled, and the child care provider did not receive a call, the childcare provider pledges to contact the parent immediately to ensure the safety of your child.
- ◆ Never leave a child alone in a car.
- ◆ Never let children play in an unattended vehicle. Teach children that a vehicle is not a play area.
- ◆ Never leave a child in a parked vehicle, even if the windows are partially open.
- ◆ **Observe and Report:**
 - ◆ If you see a child alone in a car, call 911, especially on warm days!



Traffic Injury Prevention Project



1-800-CAR BELT
www.pakidstravelsafe.org

<https://www.safercar.gov/parents/InandAroundtheCar/heatstroke.htm>