Children and cars in hot weather

A parked car can heat to deadly levels within minutes, and children overheat much faster than adults. This page helps families build habits that stop a child or pet being left behind, and explains what to do if you find a child alone in a hot car.

CHECKLIST

- [ ] Habit: check the back seat every time you leave the car
- [ ] Reminder item placed in the back seat
- [ ] Car always locked when not in use
- [ ] Car keys stored out of children's reach
- [ ] Nursery or school asked to call if your child is absent
- [ ] UAE emergency numbers saved: 999 police, 998 ambulance

BEFORE

- Never leave a child alone in a parked car, even with the windows open.
- A car can heat up 20°F (about 11°C) in 10 minutes. Cracked windows or shade barely help.
- Children heat up three to five times faster than adults.
- Check the whole car, especially the back seat, every time you get out.
- Leave a reminder in the back seat, such as your bag, so you always look.
- Ask the nursery or school to call you if your child does not arrive.

DURING

- If you see a child alone in a car, check if they respond. If not, call emergency services.
- In the UAE, call 999 for police or 998 for an ambulance.
- If the child seems fine, look for the parent or ask shop security to page them.
- If two of you are there, one searches for the parent while the other stays by the car.
- If the child is unresponsive or distressed, get in to help, even by breaking a window.
- Once out, cool the child down as quickly as possible.
- Never leave a dog in a warm car. If you see one in distress, call the emergency number.

AFTER

- Treat confusion, slurred speech or hot, red skin as heat stroke. Get hospital care at once.
- Move the child somewhere cool, ideally air-conditioned, and apply cool wet cloths.
- Place cold wet cloths or ice on the head, neck, armpits and groin.
- Do not give drinks to someone with heat stroke.

IN THE UAE

Abu Dhabi Police say leaving children alone in a vehicle and endangering their lives is a crime, and negligent people are referred to the judicial authorities. They warn a child can suffocate if the car stops running, or cause an accident by playing with the gear stick.

MY NOTES

Sources: Abu Dhabi Police, Leaving children in vehicles and endangering them is punishable by law (https://www.adpolice.gov.ae/Media-Center/News/2021/07/01/Leaving-children-in-vehicles-and-endangering-them-is-punishable-by-law-); NHTSA (US Department of Transportation), NHTSA urges public to help prevent child heatstroke (https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/nhtsa-urges-public-help-prevent-child-heatstroke); NHTSA (US Department of Transportation), Consumer advisory: NHTSA issues alert to prevent child heatstroke in cars (https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/consumer-advisory-nhtsa-issues-alert-prevent-child-heatstroke-cars); CDC, Protect your kids when it's hot outside (https://cdc.gov/natural-disasters/psa-toolkit/protect-your-kids-when-its-hot-outside.html); Bassetlaw District Council (UK), Dogs die in hot cars (https://www.bassetlaw.gov.uk/environmental-health/animal-welfare/dogs-die-in-hot-cars); US National Weather Service, Heat illness (https://weather.gov/safety/heat-illness); UAE Government portal (u.ae), Handling emergencies (https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/handling-emergencies); CDC (NIOSH), Heat-related illnesses (https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/heat-stress/about/illnesses.html)
General guidance in our own words. Always follow your local authorities.