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Greene County



Greene County Public Health

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Press Release

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Greene County Public Health Warns Families About the Dangers of Heatstroke *Parents Encouraged to ‘Look Before You Lock’*

XENIA, OH – Outside of crashes, heatstroke is the number one vehicle-related killer of children in the United States. That’s why Greene County Public Health along with the Greene County Safe Communities Coalition is teaming up with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in an attempt to reduce these deaths by reminding parents and caregivers about the dangers of vehicular heatstroke and leaving children in hot cars. In 2019, there were 52 preventable deaths of children in vehicles, only one child less than in 2018.

“As outside temperatures rise, the risk of children dying from vehicular heatstroke increases,” said Jillian Drew, health educator and head of the Greene County Safe Communities Coalition through Greene County Public Health. “One child dies from heatstroke nearly every 10 days in the United States from being left in a car or crawling into an unlocked vehicle. What is most tragic is that every single one of these deaths could have been prevented.”

Greene County Public Health and the Greene County Safe Communities Coalition urges all parents and caregivers to do these three things:

- NEVER leave a child in a vehicle unattended.
- Make it a habit to look in the back seat EVERY time you exit the car.
- ALWAYS lock the car and put the keys out of reach.

If you are a bystander and see a child in a hot vehicle:

- Make sure the child is okay and responsive. If not, call 911 immediately.
- If the child appears to be okay, attempt to locate the parents or have the facility’s security or management page the car owner over the PA system.
- If there is someone with you, one person should actively search for the parent while the other waits at the car.
- If the child is not responsive or appears to be in distress, attempt to get into the car to assist the child—even if that means breaking a window—many states have “Good Samaritan” laws that protect people from lawsuits for getting involved to help a person in an emergency.

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Know the warning signs of heatstroke, which include red, hot, and moist or dry skin; no sweating; a strong rapid pulse or a slow weak pulse; nausea; confusion; or acting strangely. If a child exhibits any of these signs after being in a hot vehicle, quickly spray the child with cool water or with a garden hose—NEVER put a child in an ice bath. Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately.

A child's body temperature can rise up to five times faster than an adult's, and heatstroke can occur in outside temperatures as low as 57 degrees. On an 80-degree day, a car can reach deadly levels in just 10 minutes. "More than half (54%) of all vehicle-related heatstroke deaths in children are caused by a child accidentally being left in the car, and 26% are from a child getting into a hot car unsupervised," said Drew. "We want to get the word out to parents and caregivers: please *Look Before You Lock*."

For more information about Greene County Public Health or the Greene County Safe Communities Coalition, visit the website at www.gcpb.info or call 937-374-5600.

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