

TRAGEDY CAN STRIKE QUICKLY FOR KIDS LEFT ALONE IN CARS

The temperature was only in the low-60s in early June 2000 when a New Jersey mother left her 13-month-old son in the car while she visited a friend. "Jack" was in his carseat with the car windows up for more than two hours. Although his mother came out to check on him periodically, the

third time was too late. She found him unresponsive. Later, he died. An hour after his death, Jack's body temperature was 108 degrees.

Experts say there is no

safe period of time for a child to be alone inside a car, even with the windows "cracked." Permanent brain damage or death can occur in a short time, even when outdoor temperatures are relatively mild.

In 2003 so far, 34 U.S. children left unattended in or around vehicles have died, according to Kids 'n Cars, a project of the nonprofit Trauma Foundation based at San Francisco General Hospital. In 2002, 30 children died of hyperthermia (heat stroke) after being left inside vehicles.

Children's developing respiratory systems make them more vulnerable to heat exhaustion, which occurs when heat stress results in depletion of body fluids. If left untreated, heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke, the most severe form of heat illness and a life-threatening emergency. If a child who is dehydrated can't sweat enough to cool his body, internal temperature may rise to a dangerous level and cause heat stroke. Symptoms of heat stroke can include lethargy and loss of consciousness. Babies can appear to be sleeping when they are actually in distress.

A survey conducted last year by the National Safe Kids Campaign and an auto manufacturer found that while more adults overall have a greater awareness of the hazards of leaving

children in or around a car, one in five younger parents said they thought it was OK to leave kids alone.

A recent study at San Francisco State University showed that even on a 73-degree day, the passenger compartment of a dark sedan reached 100 degrees after only 15 minutes and 110 degrees at 30 minutes. A white mini-van took only 35 minutes to reach 100 degrees.

Parents and caregivers should follow these precautions from safety organizations:

- ✓ Never leave a child unattended in or around a vehicle. Be sure relatives and caregivers follow the same precautions.
- ✓ Keep vehicles locked at all times, even in the driveway or garage. Kids have climbed into cars to hide or explore, and parents don't always know to check their vehicles.
- ✓ Always ensure that all child passengers have left the vehicle after it has been parked.
- ✓ Keep car keys and remote openers out of the reach of children.
- ✓ If a child is missing, check vehicles and trunks right away.

For parents concerned they might forget they are carrying a child in the carseat behind them, leave a stuffed animal in the seat. Then remove the toy and place it in the front seat every time a child is riding in the car. It can serve as a reminder that "precious cargo" is being carried.

— Alyson Sulaski Wyckoff

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Injury Prevention Program

California Chapter 4, American Academy of Pediatrics
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The California Chapter 4, American Academy of Pediatrics Injury Prevention Program was developed in 2001 with the mission to contribute to the prevention of injury, death and disability and secure wellness for children age 0-5 years and their families. Funding for this project is provided by the Children and Families Commission of Orange County.

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SAFETY MATTERS IN AND AROUND WATER

Drowning is the leading cause of death for young children in Orange County. Between the years 1998-2000, ninety-eight OC children 0-5 years were hospitalized or died as a result of drowning: 75% occurred in residential pools; 14% occurred in bathtubs.

Submersion in water has a high fatality rate: there are no second chances. A child can drown in a few minutes — before an adult even realizes the child is "missing."

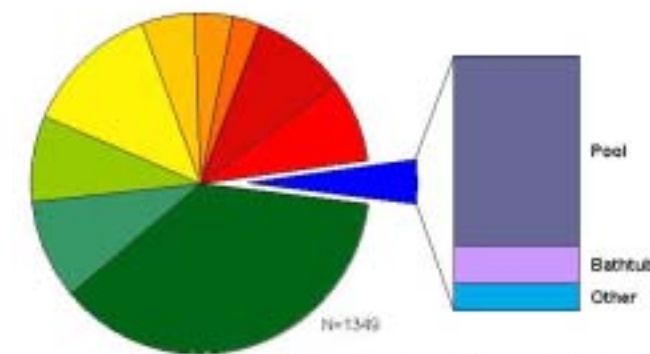
Normal developmental milestones place children at increased risk. The ability to crawl, walk, climb, and open doors enables children to access pools and other bodies of water. Children are naturally curious, impulsive and lack hazard awareness.

LAYERS OF BARRIERS

A 4-sided fence isolating the pool from the house and the rest of the property, with a self-locking and self-closing gate, is the most effective strategy available to prevent children from accessing a pool. However, gaps in fencing and malfunctioning or open

Submersion Injuries 0-5 year olds

Hospitalizations and Deaths, 1998-2000



Source: OC death files and CA hospital discharge data set

gates render this strategy ineffective when used as a sole protective barrier. Supervision is essential even with a fenced pool. When children are in the pool area, near open bodies of water or in the bathtub, "hands on" adult supervision is the only strategy for prevention.

(continued: see **Around Water**, page 3)

DROWNING PREVENTION MESSAGES FOR PARENTS

- ✓ Don't leave your child in the bathtub alone, even for a second. If you must leave the bathroom, take your child with you.
- ✓ Whenever possible, keep your bathroom door closed and latched.
- ✓ Keep your hands on your child at all times when he/she is near any water.
- ✓ Make sure that any pool at or near your home has a 4-foot fence around all 4 sides. The fence gate should close by itself and stay shut. It should be self-latching and the latch should be out of reach of children. The fence gate should open away from the pool.
- ✓ If there's a pond or other body of water on or near your property, make sure that there is fencing around it.

RESOURCES FOR DROWNING PREVENTION AND POOL FENCING GUIDELINES:

California Chapter 4, American Academy of Pediatrics, SCIPP • <http://www.ockeepkidssafe.org>

American Academy of Pediatrics • <http://www.aap.org> • Policy statement on drowning prevention and swim lessons

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, SafeUSA • <http://www.cdc.gov>

Consumer Product Safety Commission • <http://www.cpsc.gov>

National Safe Kids Campaign and Orange County Safe Kids Coalition • www.safekids.org



Safety Around Dogs

Summers in Orange County provide us all with a wonderful opportunity to spend quality time outdoors with our families, our friends, and our favorite 4-legged companions. With more than 61 million in the United States, dogs have become beloved companions that enrich many lives. Unfortunately, domestic animal attacks are occurring more frequently, often with devastating consequences. Over 4.5 million Americans will suffer from dog bites this year. More than 60% of these victims will be children. Each year, 800,000 people require medical attention for dog bites, and nearly 20 of them will die each from these injuries.

Seventy percent of all dog bites occur on the owner's property from their own family pet. Some studies have identified certain dog breeds as being at higher risk of attacking (such as Pit-bull terriers and Rottweillers), however any dog can bite severely enough to fatally injure a young child or infant. Dogs' teeth are designed to tear tissue. Lacerations and punctures are the most common types of wounds seen. Childhood fatalities usually result from severe hemorrhage of major vessels in the head or neck. For those children who survive a dog attack, the scars that they have received — both physical and emotional — often last a lifetime.

Children are at greater risk of injury and death from dog bites, not only because of their small size, quick unpredictable movements, and inability to fend off an attack, but also because they may not yet know how to behave appropriately around animals. Younger children have difficulty distinguishing an animal from a toy, and they may inadvertently provoke a bite through teasing or mistreatment. Also, parents may assume their pets are protective and may leave young children attended in the pet's care.

PREVENTION MESSAGES

Physicians, parents, and pet owners are the keys to preventing dog bites. Education for dog owners and the general public, increased awareness of potential danger — especially where children are concerned — and better animal control must all work together to prevent dog bite injuries. Be sure to ask parents about pets or animals in and around the home and where their child is cared for. Discuss the potential risk of animal bites, and teach prevention measures as well as treatment measures if their child is bitten.

Injuries from dog bites affect everyone. To reduce the painful and costly burden of dog bites, we must do our part as physicians to teach the children and families in the community to enjoy, appreciate, and respect all animals.

For further information contact:
Orange County Health Care Agency: Animal Care Services Website • <http://www.ocpetinfo.com/>

References:
"Dog Bite Injuries" Centers for Disease Control: Injury Fact Book 2001-2002. Retrieved June 26, 2003, from http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/fact_book/14_Dog_Bite_Injuries.htm

Gilchrist, J, et al. "Nonfatal dog bite — related injuries treated in hospital emergency departments — United States, 2001". *MMWR* 2003, 52(26): 605-610.

Hoff GL, Brawley J, Johnson K. Companion Animal Issues and the Physician, *Southern Medical Journal*, Jul 1999;92(7): 651-9.

Quinlan KP, Sacks JJ. Hospitalizations for Dog Bite Injuries [letter], *JAMA* 1999; 281:232-233.

"Take a Bite Out of Dog Attacks, Says American Society of Plastic Surgeons, American Veterinary Medicine Association, and Centers for Disease Control: Coalition Provides Prevention Tips for National Dog Bite Prevention Week, May 18-24." Retrieved June 26, 2003, from http://www.plasticsurgery.org/news_room/press_releases/Take-a-Bite-Out-of-Dog-Attacks.cfm

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 16-17, 2003

Breaking the Cycle of Violence

September 16

CME Dinner Meeting

Turnip Rose, Orange, CA.

September 17

Pediatric Grand Rounds

CHOC Harold Wade Educational Center
Orange, CA.

September 22-24, 2003

17th Annual California Conference on
Childhood Injury Control

Radisson Hotel at Los Angeles Airport

October 10-12, 2003

Current Advances in Pediatrics
Irvine Marriott Hotel, Irvine, CA.

IN YOUR MAIL SOON... "CAR SAFETY SEAT GROWTH CHART" MATERIALS



Watch your mail for the "Car Safety Seat Growth Chart" — an original poster produced by the California Chapter 4, AAP Injury Prevention Program.

Instructions for use:

1. Hang the poster in a very visible location in your office (e.g. near the scale, or in the exam room).
2. Based on the child's weight, you or your office staff can show the parent which column applies to his/her child.
3. Circle the appropriate column on the tear-off sheet included in this mailing, and give that to the parent to take home.

For more information, or to order more posters or sheets, please contact the California Chapter 4, AAP Injury Prevention Program. (Note: the tear-off sheets will also be available soon in Spanish and Vietnamese)

Around Water (from page 1)

SWIMMING LESSONS

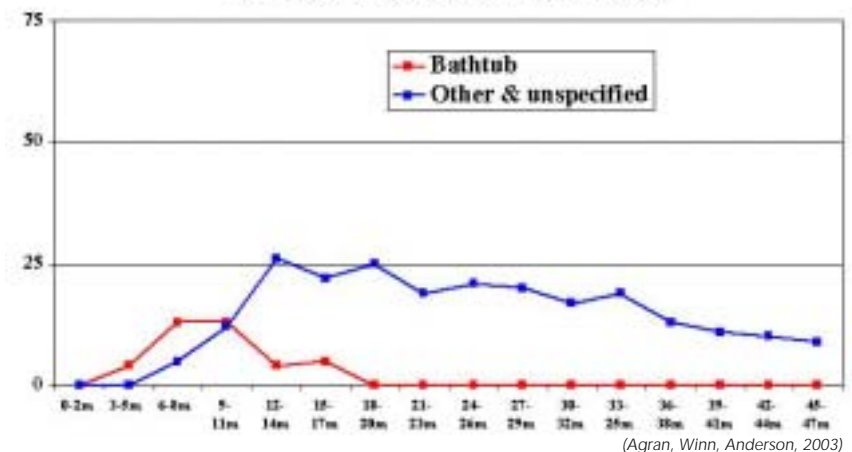
Parents will hear that swimming lessons for toddlers may prevent their child from drowning. Inform your patients that there is no data for swimming lessons as a drowning prevention strategy. From a developmental perspective children are not ready for formal swimming lessons until after their 4th birthday. The AAP believes that swimming lessons may promote a false sense of security that the child is water-safe. There is no scientific evidence that a child who apparently can swim will be able to use these skills when he or she unexpectedly falls into a body of water.

PARENT MESSAGES

Integrating developmentally appropriate injury messages with developmental assessments is one strategy for anticipatory guidance. Carefully screen families with home swimming pools/spas and make sure that they have isolation fencing around these areas, and use the drowning prevention messages listed on page 1 of this newsletter.

Submerisions

Rates of hospitalization and death per 100,000 by 3 mo intervals 0-4 years, CA 1996-1998



DOG BITE PREVENTION MESSAGES FOR PARENTS

- ✓ Never leave a young child alone or unsupervised with any pet or animal.
- ✓ Don't allow your child to provoke a dog by pulling it's tail or taking away a toy or food.
- ✓ Make sure your child does not disturb a dog when it's sleeping or eating.
- ✓ If you are getting a dog as a companion for your child, wait until the child is mature enough to handle and care for the dog — usually around age five or six.
- ✓ Follow all local regulations with regard to pet licensing, vaccinations, leash laws, and having your dog spayed or neutered.

TEACHING A CHILD HOW TO GREET A DOG

The child should:

- ✓ stand still while the dog sniffs the child.
- ✓ slowly extend a hand to pet the dog.
- ✓ stand still if approached or chased by a strange dog, and should not run, kick, or make threatening gestures.
- ✓ in a close encounter, face the dog and back away slowly until out of reach.