



Carbon Monoxide

Medical experts agree that carbon monoxide (CO) is dangerous! Hundreds die each year from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning. Here's some information to help protect you and your family.

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless and colorless gas which could be created whenever a fuel (such as wood, gasoline, coal, natural gas, kerosene, etc.) is burning. However, sometimes other odors and smells are present with carbon monoxide.

You may be exposed to carbon monoxide gas when:

- you leave your car, truck or van engine running
- your home contains an incorrectly vented or malfunctioning hot water heater, furnace, space heater, fireplace or stove
- you burn charcoal, alcohol or gasoline in an enclosed tent, camper or room
- you smoke a cigar, cigarette or pipe

What are some of the common sources of carbon monoxide?

- malfunctioning cooking appliance
- tobacco smoke
- clogged chimney
- auto exhaust
- malfunctioning water heater
- malfunctioning oil, wood, gas or coal furnaces
- malfunctioning gas clothes dryer
- wood burning fireplace, decorative fireplace, gas log burner, or any unvented space heater
- other possible sources: appliances in cabins or campers, barbecue grills, lack of adequate ventilation, pool/spa heaters, ceiling-mounted heating unit,

How does carbon monoxide harm you?

Quite simply, carbon monoxide prevents oxygen from being used by your body. Carbon monoxide is poisonous and can harm your central nervous system.

Who is at risk?

Everyone is at risk of being poisoned by carbon monoxide. However, individuals with existing health problems such as heart and lung disease and the elderly are especially vulnerable. Infants, children and pregnant women are also at high risk.

What are the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning?

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning mimics many common illnesses such as the flu and food poisoning.

Some of the common symptoms associated with carbon monoxide poisoning are:

- headaches
- dizziness
- weakness
- nausea
- rapid heartbeat
- seizures
- cardiac arrest
- loss of hearing
- blurry vision
- vomiting
- disorientation
- loss of consciousness
- coma
- respiratory failure

This list is not meant to serve as a diagnosis of carbon monoxide poisoning, but it is meant to provide information on carbon monoxide poisoning symptoms. Always check with your doctor.

What can I do to protect myself and my family?

You should have your furnace and fireplace cleaned and inspected before each heating season. Use non-electrical space heaters only in well-ventilated areas. Don't start or leave running cars, trucks or other vehicles in an enclosed area.

Should I get a Carbon Monoxide Detector?

Carbon monoxide (CO) detectors can help alert you to increased level of carbon monoxide in your home. **BUT THEY ARE NOT FOOLPROOF.**

These guidelines should be followed:

CALL - if your detector alarm sounds and you are experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning leave your home and immediately call your local emergency services number or 911.

CHECK - if your detector alarm sounds and you have no symptoms or carbon monoxide poisoning: first check the detector, push the reset button (if available), turn off any appliances or other sources of combustion, get fresh air to the building, and check for sources of carbon monoxide. Adjust, repair or replace as needed by calling a qualified service company.

Always - if you think you have symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning and you do not have a detector, call your emergency services number of 911 immediately.

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