



Protect Your Family from Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

You can't see it or smell it, but it can kill you. So, what can you do?

It's no secret that Carbon Monoxide (CO) can be deadly. Hundreds young and old die of emission poisoning every year, from cars, gas stoves and other fuel burning appliances. Question is, how can you defend yourself against the so-called "silent killer"? **Carbon monoxide** is produced when fossil fuels like gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal are burned. Use your fuel burning appliances properly and the amount of CO is minimal and not life threatening. Use them improperly or in a state of disrepair and you're risking your life.

Below are facts and information on Carbon Monoxide poisoning and how to avoid it.

HOW DOES CARBON MONOXIDE ENTER THE HOME?

1. A recent report from the United States reports that up to 30% of newly remodeled energy efficient buildings have indoor air quality problems related to CO. New homes are constructed to seal in as much heat as possible. While this conserves energy, it limits free air exchange.
2. CO is produced by the incomplete combustion of fuel. Appliances such as water heaters, furnaces, stoves and space heaters that are fueled by natural gas, propane, kerosene or wood emit CO.
3. If these appliances are not properly installed, maintained or used, dangerous CO can result.

What are CO Poisoning Symptoms?

CO poisoning symptoms are similar to illnesses such as the flu or the start of a cold. At low levels, you or our family may experience:

1. shortness of breath
2. mild headaches
3. mild nausea

Extended exposure to low to moderate levels can have long term health effects:

1. severe headaches
2. dizziness or faintness
3. vomiting
4. mental confusion
5. nausea
6. fatigue

Symptoms will often become worse with continued exposure, and may include

- severe headaches
- mental confusion
- vomiting
- vision and hearing impairment
- unconsciousness. When CO poisoning reaches this final stage, memory loss, permanent brain damage, coma and eventually death can result.

If you experience symptoms that you think could be from CO poisoning:

1. **Get fresh air.** Open doors and windows, turn off combustion appliances and leave the house.
2. **Get to a hospital.** If CO poisoning has occurred, it can be diagnosed by a blood test done soon after exposure.
3. **Prepare.** Answering these questions will help your physician diagnose you:
 - a. Do your symptoms occur only in the house?
 - b. Do they disappear or decrease when you leave home and appear when you return?
 - c. Is anyone else in your house with similar symptoms?
 - d. Do symptoms appear about the same time with everyone else?
 - e. Do you use fuel-burning appliances in the home?
 - f. Have you had these appliances inspected lately?
 - g. Are your appliances working properly?

Prevention can keep you alive and well.

1. **Inspect it.** Have all oil and gas furnaces, gas water heaters, gas ranges and ovens, gas dryers, gas or kerosene space heaters, fireplaces, and wood stoves inspected by a trained professional prior to every winter. Make sure your flues and chimneys are connected, in good condition, and not blocked.
2. **According to the instructions....** Choose appliances that vent fumes outside, have them installed professionally, and maintain them to manufacturer instructions.
3. **A little goes a long way.** Read and follow all instructions that accompany any fuel-burning device. If you can't avoid using an unvented fuel space heater, carefully follow cautions that come with the device. Use the proper fuel and keep doors to the rest of the house open. Crack a window for ventilation.
4. **Don't use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time.**
5. **Of running cars and closed garages....** Don't idle your car in a garage, even if the garage door to the outside is open. Fumes build up fast in the garage and in your home.
6. **Not even in a fireplace.** Don't use a charcoal grill indoors.
7. **Curling up with kerosene can kill you.** Never sleep in any room with an unvented gas or kerosene space heater.
8. **Do it outside.** Use gasoline-powered mowers, weed trimmers, snow blowers, chain saws, small engines or generators where nature intended it, outside.
9. **If you feel sick, see your doctor.** Don't ignore unusual or flu-like symptoms, particularly if more than one person is feeling them in your house. Be aware. Be prepared. And stay safe.