

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning: A Preventable Threat

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that can cause sudden illness and death. CO is produced any time a fossil fuel is burned in a furnace, vehicle, generator, grill, or elsewhere. CO from these sources can build up in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces and poison the people and animals in them.

What are the most common sources of carbon monoxide?

- Gasoline powered engines such as cars and boats
- Gas stoves and ovens
- Charcoal grills
- Furnaces and water heaters
- Oil, gas or kerosene heaters
- Leaking chimneys or fireplaces

What are the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning?

Carbon monoxide poisoning symptoms are similar to those of the flu. Symptoms include:

- Headaches
- Drowsiness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Dizziness
- Weakness

People who are asleep or drunk can die from carbon monoxide poisoning before they have symptoms, which is why it is very important to have a CO detector in your home.

How can I prevent carbon monoxide poisoning?

Take the following steps to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning in your home:

- Install a battery-operated or battery back-up CO detector in your home.

- Have your heating system, water heater and any other gas-burning appliances serviced by a professional each year.
- Never leave a vehicle running in a garage, even with the garage door open.
- Make sure your car's tailpipe is clear of snow and other obstructions.
- Do not run fuel-powered tools or other equipment inside the home or garage, even with the door open.
- Never burn a charcoal grill or portable gas camp stove indoors or in a garage.
- Make sure your gas appliances are vented properly.
- Never use a gas range or oven to heat your home.
- Have your chimney cleaned and inspected every year.



How do I use a carbon monoxide detector?

- Detectors should be installed in the hallway near the bedrooms in each separate sleeping area and on every level of the home.
- Keep and read the instructions included with your detector for the manufacturer's recommendation on battery replacement, alarms, cleaning of the detector, precautions and life span of the detector.
- Check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall.

What should I do if I suspect carbon monoxide poisoning?

- Get into fresh air immediately.
- Call the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.
- Go to the doctor right away if anyone has any symptoms of CO inhalation, is pregnant or has heart issues.
- If you suspect a faulty appliance is letting out large amounts of carbon monoxide, call your local fire department or gas company for assistance in testing the air for CO.
- Do not re-enter the building until the fire department or gas company says it is safe.

Poisonings can happen to anyone. When in doubt, check it out!

If you think someone has been poisoned, call 1-800-222-1222 right away. Serious poisonings don't always have early signs. Remember, the poison help number is not just for emergencies; you can call with questions as well. All calls are free and confidential.

QUICK TIPS:

The Poison Control Center recommends the following tips to help prevent unintentional poisonings.

- Save the Poison Help number, 1-800-222-1222, in your phone as a contact and post it in your home for babysitters and visitors.
- Keep all medicine, cleaning products and chemicals out of reach and out of sight of children.
- Make sure all cleaning products, including laundry products, are stored in their original containers. Never place them in other containers, such as soda bottles or jars, that might lead to children thinking the substance is a food or beverage.
- Install safety latches on cabinets and drawers used for medicine and household products and cleaners.
- Keep purses, diaper bags, work and travel bags up and out of reach of small children.
- Buy products with child-resistant packaging when possible, but remember nothing is "child-proof"
- Read medicine and product labels before each use and follow directions exactly.
- Never call medicine "candy" or make a game out of taking medicine.
- Teach children to ask an adult before tasting anything.
- Avoid taking medicine in front of children. They like to imitate adults and may follow your example.
- Safely dispose of expired or unneeded medicines.
- Never give or take more than the prescribed amount of medicine.
- Use only the measuring device, such as the dosing cup, syringe or dropper, that is included with your medicine. Never use a kitchen spoon.
- Do not put medicines, cleaning products and chemicals in the same cabinet as food.
- Be aware of where button batteries are within your home. Places can include remote controls, key fobs and watches. Keep away from children.
- Find out the names of the plants in your house and yard. Keep houseplants out of reach of small children and pets.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors on every level of the home.



The University of Kansas Hospital Poison Center is one of only 55 poison centers in the United States and the only one in Kansas. It is certified by the American Association of Poison Control Centers. Poison centers offer free, confidential medical advice **24 hours a day, seven days a week** through the Poison Helpline at **1-800-222-1222**.

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