

CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless, and non-irritating gas that is a product of incomplete burning of carbon-containing materials such as gasoline, charcoal, and wood.

An estimated 3,500 to 4,000 deaths occur each year as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning, making it the leading cause of death due to poisoning. About 10,000 people lose a day of work or seek medical attention each year because of carbon monoxide poisoning. As people attempt to conserve heat by making their homes “airtight,” the incidence of poisoning increases.

Carbon monoxide impairs the ability of blood to carry oxygen. The brain and heart are very sensitive to lack of oxygen. People with heart and lung disease are at higher risk of developing problems from carbon monoxide, as are children and old people. The unborn child is also very sensitive to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning

- sleepiness
- nausea
- vomiting
- headache
- blurred vision
- dizziness
- irritability
- difficulty thinking
- coma

Note: *Flu-like symptoms can be due to carbon monoxide poisoning. Beware of several family members complaining of flu symptoms the same day.*

Sources of carbon monoxide

- fires
- gasoline-powered engines
- faulty heating equipment
- gas water heaters
- kerosene or propane space heaters
- charcoal grills
- paint remover

People at risk for carbon monoxide poisoning

- people in homes with malfunctioning heating appliances
- firefighters
- steel and other industrial workers
- auto mechanics
- warehouse storage workers
- workers at loading facilities
- drivers and passengers in automobiles with faulty exhaust systems
- people in fish houses

What to do:

- Act quickly to remove person from environment.
- Call 911 if someone is seriously ill.
- Call Poison Center (612-347-3141) for further information.

How to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- **INSTALL A CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR** in your home. Choose a detector that has an audible alarm and a digital readout of the carbon monoxide concentration. Place the detector near the bedroom. Detectors are available at hardware, discount, and building supply stores.
- **PROVIDE ADEQUATE VENTILATION** when using wood stoves, space heaters, and fireplaces. Make sure all flame-burning appliances are properly installed and operated and have routine maintenance.
- **MAKE SURE** your furnace has adequate intake of outside air.
- **DO NOT USE** ovens and gas ranges for heating purposes.
- **DO NOT OPERATE** gasoline-powered engines in confined areas, such as garages or basements.
- **DO NOT BURN** charcoal inside a home, cabin, recreational vehicle, or tent.
- **HAVE ONLY A QUALIFIED TECHNICIAN** install or convert fuel-burning equipment from one type of fuel to another.

**CARBON
MONOXIDE
POISONING:**
you could be at risk!



Hennepin County Medical Center
HCMC
Level 1 Trauma Center

701 Park Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55415