

What you need to know about Carbon monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless and poisonous gas. It is produced by the incomplete burning of fuel such as natural gas, gasoline, kerosene, oil, wood or charcoal. Carbon monoxide decreases the ability of the red blood cells to carry oxygen throughout the body and decreases the use of oxygen by the cells. If a person breathes carbon monoxide for a long enough period of time or at a high enough concentration, it can kill.

1-800-222-1222

Poison Experts just a
phone call away!

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Signs and symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are:

- Dizziness
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Vomiting
- Confusion
- Fainting
- Seizures
- Coma
- Effects on the heart

Notice that many of these signs and symptoms mimic the flu!

Common sources of carbon monoxide in and around the home are:

- Gas, oil or wood furnaces
- Gas and charcoal grills
- Portable generators and heaters
- Cars, trucks and vans
- Gas or oil hot water heaters
- Lawnmowers, trimmers and leaf blowers
- Gas stoves
- Some paint strippers
- Gas clothes dryers
- House and structure fires
- Fireplaces and wood stoves

To prevent unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Use carbon monoxide detectors.
- Have gas and oil burning appliances checked on a regular basis.
- Have chimneys and venting checked yearly at the beginning of the heating season.
- Check to see that the pilot light on gas burning appliances is lit (blue flame)
- Use generators outside more than 20 feet away from windows and doors.
- Do not use the oven to heat your home.
- Do not use portable heaters while you are sleeping.
- Do not use charcoal or gas grills in the house or garage or in a tent.
- Do not let the car run while in the garage (even if the garage door is open).

What to do in an emergency

- Call the Maryland Poison Center.
- Remove all people and pets from the area.
- Turn off the suspected source of carbon monoxide and have the appliance checked before using it again.

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