

Carbon Monoxide-An Invisible Killer

What is it?

- Carbon monoxide (CO) is a by-product of combustion, present whenever fuel is burned. It is produced by common home appliances, such as gas or oil furnaces, gas refrigerators, gas clothes dryers, gas stoves, gas water heaters or space heaters, fireplaces, charcoal grills, and wood burning stoves.

Why is it dangerous?

- **CO is poisonous and can be lethal at high concentrations. You cannot see it, smell it, or taste it.**

How does poisoning happen?

- When a person breathes in CO gas, the gas molecules block blood cells from binding and transporting oxygen throughout the body. This lack of oxygen can result in headache, nausea, vomiting, confusion, dizziness, drowsiness, chest pain, fever, blurred vision, shortness of breath, loss of consciousness, and death.

What can you do to prevent it?

- Install a CO detector in bedrooms, living rooms, and kitchens.
- Change detector batteries at least twice a year and replace detectors every five years.
- Use a qualified technician to install and annually check fuel burning appliances to ensure correct venting is used to prevent CO leaks into your home.
- **Never use gasoline or coal burning camp stoves, grills, or generators inside your home, and never leave vehicles running in attached garages.**
- Regularly clean chimneys and fireplaces to prevent CO buildup.
- If you develop symptoms of CO poisoning or your detector alarm turns on, immediately exit your house to an outside area where there is clean, fresh air and call 911.

Sources

<https://www.cdc.gov/co/default.htm>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/carbon-monoxide/symptoms-causes/syc-20370642>

<https://www.cdc.gov/co/guidelines.htm>

<https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00415.asp>

For any questions about indoor air quality or carbon monoxide poisoning, please contact:

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