

SEASONAL HEALTH ALERT

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

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Contact WAPC at mryuk@wapc.org with questions

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless, and *dangerous* gas that is responsible for hundreds of calls each year to the Washington Poison Center. Follow this helpful information to prevent carbon monoxide exposure and stay healthy.

Where is carbon monoxide found?

- Carbon monoxide is found in the fumes produced by fuel in running cars, trucks, small engines, stoves, lanterns, grills, fireplaces, gas ranges, furnaces, and more.

How are people exposed to carbon monoxide?

- People are exposed to carbon monoxide through faulty furnace or water heating systems or blocked exhaust systems, particularly when turning them on for the first time in the fall or winter.
- Other frequently reported sources of carbon monoxide exposure include:
 - Using a propane or charcoal grill indoors
 - A defective fireplace or chimney (resulting in blocked or otherwise limited ventilation)
 - Running a gas or diesel engine inside a closed garage

Who is at risk for carbon monoxide poisoning?

- All people are at risk for poisoning from carbon monoxide, regardless of age, health, or any other factor.

What are symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning?

- The most common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are: headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion— people oftentimes describe symptoms as “flu-like.” Breathing in large quantities of carbon monoxide can cause loss of consciousness and even death.

What should I do if I think I've been exposed to carbon monoxide?

- Immediately go outside to get fresh air.
- If you or someone else is having difficulty breathing, severe chest pain, and/or is unconscious and cannot be removed, call 911.
- Call the poison center if you think you have been exposed and have symptoms.
- Call your local fire department to have the building tested and inspected.
- Do not reenter the building until emergency responders have given you permission.

How can I prevent carbon monoxide poisoning?

- Install battery-operated carbon monoxide detectors outside of every sleeping area in your home. Be sure to change batteries twice a year when changing clocks, and replace the entire detector every five years.
- Have your heating systems (fireplace, flue, chimney, furnace) inspected annually.
- Never use charcoal grills for indoor cooking or heating.
- Never leave your car running inside an enclosed space.
- Place generators outside and at least 20 feet away from the building/home, doors, and windows.



Image source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Carbon Monoxide Poisoning