

Carbon Monoxide

DEFINITION • IDENTIFICATION • PREVENTION

What is Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that may be deadly. It has *no color, taste or smell*. It is produced when fossil fuels such as natural gas, gasoline, diesel, kerosene, propane, oil, coal and wood are burned incompletely. Each year hundreds of people die as a result of accidental carbon monoxide poisoning.

What are the Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning?

Carbon monoxide poisoning may be mistaken for the flu or food poisoning. *Symptoms include sleepiness, headache, dizziness, difficulty thinking, blurred vision, nausea, shortness of breath and chest pain.* These symptoms may progress and become life-threatening. Whenever more than one person in a home or office becomes ill with any combination of these symptoms carbon monoxide poisoning should be suspected. Those more susceptible to the effects of carbon monoxide include the elderly, infants, unborn babies and anyone with medical conditions affecting the heart or lungs.

What if Carbon Monoxide Poisoning is Suspected?

- Get out of the building and into fresh air immediately.
- *Seek medical attention immediately for anyone experiencing symptoms;* call 911 if necessary.
- Call the fire department and the gas company to check for possible sources of carbon monoxide.
- Do not re-enter the building until the fire department or gas company says it is safe.

Preventing Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Furnaces should be professionally inspected yearly.
- All fuel-burning equipment in the home such as water heaters, stoves, ovens and clothes dryers should also be well maintained and inspected on a regular basis.
- Kerosene and propane heaters should be vented to the outside.
- Only battery powered generators should be used indoors; portable fuel-powered generators should be used only outdoors.
- Chimneys should be cleaned and inspected yearly.
- Do not use a gas range or oven to heat a room.
- Never use a charcoal grill or hibachi indoors.
- Never leave a car running in a garage, even with the garage door open.
- Do not run fuel-powered tools or other equipment inside the home or garage even with the door open.
- Have vehicle muffler and tailpipes checked regularly.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors in the home.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- *Select carbon monoxide detectors that are UL listed.*
- Use only carbon monoxide detectors that are battery powered, or if electric, have a battery back-up.
- Detectors should be installed in the hallway near the bedrooms in each separate sleeping area of the home **and** on every level of the home.
- Keep and read the manual from your carbon monoxide detector for manufacturer's recommendations on battery replacement, alarms, cleaning of detector, precautions and life-span of the detector.
- Check with your local fire department to see if they offer free carbon monoxide detectors.