

PREVENTING CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

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I know that many people may think this article is not for them, as they have carbon monoxide detectors installed in their homes. A carbon monoxide detector should be considered a back up not a replacement for proper use and maintenance of your fuel burning appliances. Carbon monoxide detectors are not considered as reliable as a smoke detector. If you have a carbon monoxide detector don't rely on it 100%, become educated regarding carbon monoxide. When shopping for a carbon monoxide detector do some research on features and don't select one based on cost only. Look for UL certification on any detector you plan to purchase.

What is Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that is produced when a fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood or charcoal is burned.

Is Carbon Monoxide deadly?

High levels can kill a person in minutes. Hundreds of people die accidentally each year from carbon monoxide poisoning, and even more people die from the carbon monoxide produced from an idling automobile.

Who is more susceptible to carbon monoxide poisoning?

Fetuses, infants, elderly persons, and persons with anemia or a history of heart or respiratory disease.

What are the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning?

Signs of carbon monoxide poisoning may include deep and difficult respirations, skin that is much pinker than normal, slow pulse initially that soon increases, pounding of the heart, weakness, ringing in the ears, throbbing in the temples and dilated pupils. At moderate levels a person can get a severe headache, become dizzy, faint, confused or nauseated. At low levels a person can get short of breath, have mild nausea and mild headaches.

What should I do if I am experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning?

- 1. Get fresh air immediately. Open your doors and windows, turn off fuel burning appliances and leave the house.**
- 2. Go to an emergency room, or to your physician or nurse practitioner and tell them you suspect you may have carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide poisoning can be diagnosed with a blood test. Be prepared to answer the following questions for the physician or nurse practitioner:**

Do the symptoms occur only in the house? Do the symptoms disappear or decrease when you leave home and reappear when you return? Is anyone else in your home having similar symptoms? Did everyone's symptoms appear at the same time? Are you using fuel burning appliances in your home? Have the fuel burning appliances been recently inspected? Are you certain the fuel burning appliances are working properly?

How can the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning be decreased?

- 1. Have your fuel-burning appliances - - including oil and gas furnaces, gas water heaters, gas ranges and stoves, gas dryers, gas or kerosene space heaters, fireplaces and wood stoves inspected by a trained professional each year. Make certain that flues and chimneys are connected, in good condition and not blocked.**
- 2. Choose appliances that vent their fumes to the outside, have them properly installed and keep them well maintained.**
- 3. Read and follow manufacturers instructions included with fuel-burning appliances.**
- 4. Don't allow an automobile to idle in the garage, even if the garage door is up. Fumes can build up very quickly in the garage and living area of your home.**
- 5. Don't use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a little while.**
- 6. Don't use a charcoal grill indoors, even in the fireplace.**
- 7. Don't sleep in any room with an unvented gas or kerosene space heater.**
- 8. Don't use any gasoline-powered engines, such as lawn mowers, weed trimmers, snow blowers, chain saws, small engines or generators, in enclosed spaces.**
- 9. Don't ignore symptoms, especially if more than one person is having them. You and your family could lose consciousness and die if you do nothing!**

Information for this article was obtained from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at www.epa.gov. You may obtain more information on how to reduce the risks of carbon monoxide by calling the following numbers: EPA IAQ INFO Clearinghouse 1-800-438-4318 or the Consumer Protection Safety Commission 1-800-638-2772.