

Carbon Monoxide - The Silent Killer

Creeping silently through your home, there's a killer that gives no warning. This killer is carbon monoxide. An invisible and odorless gas, carbon monoxide (CO) is produced when burning any fuel, such as gasoline, propane, natural gas, oil, wood, or charcoal. It is a silent killer, which causes illness by decreasing the amount of oxygen present in the body.

Young children are especially vulnerable to the effects of carbon monoxide, because of their smaller bodies. Children process carbon monoxide differently than adults, may be more severely affected by it, and may show symptoms sooner.

You won't know that you have a carbon monoxide leak, without a working detector. If you burn any fuels for heat or cooking, be sure that you have a working carbon monoxide detector and deter this silent killer.

Carbon Monoxide Fact Sheet

Key Facts

- During 2004-2006, an average of 20,636 ED visits for nonfatal, unintentional, non-fire-related CO exposures occurred each year.
- Annually, more than 25 children ages 14 and under die from unintentional CO poisoning.
- Children ages 4 and under have the highest rate of non-fatal CO Poisonings of all age groups.



How

- CO is a colorless and odorless gas that is created when burning any fuel, such as gasoline, propane, natural gas, oil, wood and charcoal.
- Items such as generators, portable heaters or improperly ventilated stoves and fireplaces, as well as running cars can lead to a build up of CO gas in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces.
- CO causes illness by decreasing the amount of oxygen present in a person's body.

Symptoms

- The most common symptoms include headache, dizziness, fatigue, nausea, vomiting and confusion.
- In severe cases, the person may lose consciousness or even die.

- CO poisoning can often be mistaken for other illnesses, such as the flu. If there is a CO leak, more than one person in the house will often suffer symptoms at the same time.

Prevention Strategies:

To decrease risk of CO poisoning the following tips are recommended:

- Install a CO alarm outside every sleeping area and on every level of your home.
- Place CO alarms at least 15 feet away from every fuel-burning appliance to reduce the number of nuisance alarms.
- Test alarms every month and replace them every 5 years.
- Make sure alarms can be heard when you test them and practice an escape plan with your entire family.
- Have all gas, oil or coal burning appliances inspected by a technician every year to ensure they are working correctly and are properly ventilated.
- Never use a stove for heating.
- Never use a grill, generator or camping stove inside your home, garage or near a window.
- Never leave a car, SUV, or motorcycle engine running inside a garage, even if the garage door is open.
- CO can accumulate anywhere in or around your boat; **Install a CO alarm on your motorboat.**

If your CO alarm goes off, follow these simple steps:

- Get everyone out of the house as quickly as possible into fresh air. Then call for help from a neighbor's home or a cell phone outside of your home.
- If you're experiencing symptoms, call 911 for medical attention.
- If no one is experiencing symptoms, call the fire department. They will let you know when it is safe to reenter your home.