



Carbon Monoxide Safety

How to Protect Your Family



Is Your Family Protected From This Hidden Killer?

You can't see, smell, hear, feel or taste it, yet it's the leading cause of accidental poisoning in the United States.* Carbon monoxide (CO) have you taken the proper precautions to chase it from your home?

Tracking the Suspect

CO is a poisonous gas caused by problems related to a fuel-burning device, such as an oil, coal, gas, wood or a kerosene furnace or space heater. Other sources include a fireplace, woodstove, water heater, appliance (e.g., clothes dryer or stove) or engine (e.g., car, snow blower or a portable generator). Who's most at risk? The elderly, children, pregnant women and family members with anemia or heart or lung problems.

Low-level exposure to CO can be difficult to diagnose. It mimics flu-like symptoms: headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea and vomiting. Over time, low levels of CO poisoning can lead to more adverse health problems.

Dangerous levels of CO exposure, however, can cause death within just one to three minutes! That's why it's important to take preventive measures.

Prevention Checklist

Here's what you can do to help keep this unwelcome guest from invading your home.

- Purchase and install Underwriter's Laboratory-approved CO alarms outside sleeping areas (only 25% of American households have done so).* There are two types: battery-powered alarms that screw into the ceiling and should be replaced every five years, and electrical-powered alarms that plug into an outlet and last between 5 and 10 years, depending on the model.

Have a qualified professional annually inspect gas appliances and water heaters for leaks (many utility companies offer this service free of charge).

- Use fuel-burning space heaters only as a temporary heating solution in well-ventilated areas, and turn them off before sleeping.
- Do not start or leave running cars and gas-powered small engines in garages or other enclosed areas.
- If the alarm sounds and family members do not feel sick, shut off all possible sources of CO, and ventilate your home. If the alarm sounds again, immediately contact a qualified professional to inspect for leaks.
- If a CO alarm sounds and family members are experiencing symptoms of CO poisoning, evacuate your home and call your fuel company or the fire department.

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TIP! Change CO alarm batteries annually when you change the batteries on your smoke detectors. On both battery- and electrical-powered detectors, use a bright-colored indelible marker to write the month and year of expiration on the front of the alarm.

*Source: CBSNews.com, Oct. 3, 2002.

