

What is Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, colorless gas created from incomplete combustion. Heating and cooking equipment are possible sources of carbon monoxide, as are vehicles running in an attached garage. You can protect yourself by ensuring that heating equipment and furnaces are properly maintained and operated according to manufacturers recommendations. You should also never let your vehicle, or lawn and garden equipment run in an attached garage.

What are the signs of Carbon Monoxide Exposure?

The symptoms vary greatly from person to person, depending on age and general health, the concentration of exposure, and the length of exposure. High concentrations are dangerous for even brief periods. Initial symptoms can include lethargy, nausea, and headaches, but these can vary widely.

How can I protect myself from carbon monoxide poisoning?

The best protection is prevention. Insure that heating and cooking equipment is properly installed and maintained. Vehicles, and lawn and garden equipment should not be operated in attached garages.

A carbon monoxide detector installed in your home can provide an early warning of accumulating carbon monoxide, but is no substitute for proper maintenance of heating and cooking equipment.

Safety Tips

- If you need to warm up a vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting the ignition. Do not run a vehicle or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if garage doors are open.
- Have your vehicle inspected for exhaust leaks, if you have any symptoms of CO poisoning.
- Have fuel burning household heating equipment (fireplaces, furnaces, water heaters, wood stoves, and space or portable heaters) checked every year before cold weather sets in. All chimneys and chimney connectors should be evaluated for proper installation, cracks, blockages or leaks. Make needed repairs before using the equipment.
- Before enclosing central heating equipment in a smaller room, check with your fuel supplier to ensure that air for proper combustion is provided.
- When using a fireplace, open the flue for adequate ventilation.
- Kerosene heaters are illegal in many states. Always check with local authorities before buying or using one. Open a window slightly whenever using a kerosene heater. Refuel outside, after the device has cooled.
- Always use barbecue grills which can produce carbon monoxide outside. Never use them in the home or garage.

- When purchasing new heating and cooking equipment, select factory built products approved by an independent testing laboratory. Do not accept damaged equipment. Hire a qualified technician (usually employed by the local oil or gas company) to install the equipment. Ask about and insist that the technician follow applicable fire safety and local building codes.
- If you purchase an existing home have a qualified technician evaluate the integrity of the heating and cooking systems, as well as the sealed spaces between the garage and house.

If you buy a carbon monoxide detector

- Carbon monoxide detectors do NOT function as smoke detectors, nor do smoke detectors work as carbon monoxide detectors.
- Select detectors listed by a qualified, independent testing laboratory.
- Follow manufacturer's recommendations for placement in your home.
- Treat all activations as real, and evacuate your home immediately leaving the door open for ventilation on your way out. Notify the fire department from a neighbors home.
- Test CO detectors at least once a month, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Replace CO detectors according to the manufacturer' s instructions, usually about every two years.
- Replace batteries as needed and according to manufacturers recommendations.