




CARBON MONOXIDE

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development • Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control



“You can’t see or smell carbon monoxide, but at high levels it can kill a person in minutes.”

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Did you know...?

- Over 500 people in the United States die from accidental carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning each year?¹
- Over 10,000 people seek medical attention for CO poisoning each year?²
- Infants, people with lung or heart disease, or people with anemia are more seriously affected?

What is it?

Carbon monoxide is a gas that cannot be seen, smelled or tasted, and can be fatal when breathed. The symptoms that occur with carbon monoxide poisoning are similar to those of the flu and allergies. These similarities often lead to an incorrect diagnosis, such as a migraine headache, stroke, food poisoning, or heart disease.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is caused by:

- Operating fuel-burning products such as electrical generators without proper ventilation. Some of these products may be used indoors near an open window, and others may not be used indoors at all. Look at the manufacturers’ instructions before operating any fuel-burning device in your home.
- Car exhaust entering the home from the garage.
- Combustion equipment such as furnaces or hot water heaters that are not working properly or have blocked exhaust systems.

continued on back



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Do not run your car in a closed garage.



What can you do?

- Make sure fuel burning appliances are installed by a professional and are working properly.
- Never run your car in a closed garage and move cars out of attached garages immediately after starting them.
- Never use a gas range or oven to heat a home.
- Choose vented appliances (like gas fireplaces) whenever possible.
- Have your heating systems and chimneys inspected and cleaned by a qualified technician every year.
- Replace dirty air filters on heating and cooling systems.
- Never run a generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline-powered engine inside a basement, garage, or other enclosed structure, even if the doors or windows are open, unless the equipment is professionally installed and vented.
- Never use a charcoal grill, hibachi, lantern, or portable camping stove inside a home, tent, or camper.
- Make sure there is good ventilation at all times – install proper ventilation for interior combustion appliances, and consider installing air exchangers or air conditioning for “tightly-sealed” homes.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors near sleeping areas.

For more information...

Visit HUD's website at www.hud.gov/offices/lead for more information about addressing health hazards in homes or to learn if HUD has a Healthy Homes program in your community. From this website, you can download a copy of “Help Yourself to A Healthy Home” for more practical steps you can take to make your home a healthy home.

Other Federal Resources

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/carbonmonoxide/cofaq.htm

US Environmental Protection Agency

www.epa.gov/children

Other Resources

Healthy Indoor Air America's Homes

www.healthyindoorair.org/facts_co.html

Community Environmental Health Resource Center (CEHRC)

www.cehrc.org/tools/carbon/cobacmat.cfm

Ask your doctor or contact your local or state department of health.

Install carbon monoxide detectors in your home.



¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Fact Sheet” www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/carbonmonoxide/cofaq.htm August 25, 2004

²Community Environmental Health Resource Center (CEHRC) “Carbon Monoxide Background Materials” www.cehrc.org/tools/carbon/cobacmat.cfm August 25, 2004