

Protect Your Family from Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Safety Tips

- Have your home heating systems (including chimneys and vents) inspected and serviced annually by a trained service technician.
- Never use portable generators inside homes or garages, even if doors and windows are open. Use generators outside only, far away from the home.
- Never bring a charcoal grill into the house for heating or cooking. Do not barbeque in the garage.
- Never use a gas range or oven for heating.
- Open the fireplace damper before lighting a fire and keep it open until the ashes are cool. An open damper may help prevent build-up of poisonous gases inside the home.
- Install battery-operated CO alarms or CO alarms with battery backup in your home outside separate sleeping areas.
- Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning: headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, sleepiness, and confusion. If you suspect CO poisoning, get outside to fresh air immediately, and then call 911.

Know the Symptoms of CO Poisoning

Because CO is odorless, colorless, and otherwise undetectable to the human senses, people may not know that they are being exposed. The initial symptoms of low to moderate CO poisoning are similar to the flu (but without the fever). They include:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Dizziness

High level CO poisoning results in progressively more severe symptoms, including:

- Mental confusion
- Vomiting
- Loss of muscular coordination
- Loss of consciousness
- Ultimately death

Symptom severity is related to both the CO level and the duration of exposure. For slowly developing residential CO problems, occupants and/or physicians can mistake mild to moderate CO poisoning symptoms for the flu, which sometimes results in tragic deaths. For rapidly developing, high level CO exposures (e.g., associated with use of generators in residential spaces), victims can rapidly become mentally confused, and can lose muscle control without having first experienced milder symptoms; they will likely die if not rescued.

Source: United States Consumer Product Safety Commission