

Safety Alert for Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

With the arrival of the holiday season, we would like to pass along important information regarding Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning. Winter months hold the highest risk for CO poisoning, which is a safety issue wherever and whenever you burn fuel. Whether you are heating your home, cooking a Thanksgiving meal, or staying cozy before the fireplace, you are at risk. Remember, if you have fire, you have carbon monoxide!

Carbon Monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that is undetectable to the human senses. You may not know you are being exposed until it's too late.

Please read the follow tips and information to help keep you and your family safe all year long.

Carbon Monoxide Safety Tips

- Never use portable generators inside homes or garages, even if doors and windows are open. Use generators outside only, far away from the home.
- Keep any flammable materials away from the stove and oven, don't leave the kitchen unattended if you're cooking.
- Never bring a charcoal grill into the house for heating or cooking. Do not use grills in the garage.
- Never use a gas range or oven for heating.
- Have your home heating systems (including chimneys and vents) inspected and serviced annually by a trained service technician.
- Open the fireplace damper before lighting a fire. Keep the damper 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.
- 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.

Symptoms include:

- Headache
 - Fatigue
 - Shortness of breath
 - Nausea
 - Dizziness
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- High levels of CO poisoning results in progressively more severe symptoms, including:
 - Mental confusion
 - Vomiting
 - Loss of muscular coordination
 - Loss of consciousness
 - Ultimately death
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- Symptom severity is related to both the CO level and the duration of exposure.
 - 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.
 - 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.