



Carbon Monoxide Safety



Key Facts

- On average, more than an estimated 15,000 people are treated for unintentional exposure to carbon monoxide (CO) a year.
- More than 25 children ages 14 and under die from unintentional CO poisoning every year.
- Children ages 4 and under have the highest rate of non-fatal CO poisonings of all age groups.

Where and How

- CO is a colorless and odorless gas that is produced when burning any fuel, such as gasoline, propane, natural gas, oil, wood, and charcoal.
- Items such as generators, portable heaters or improperly ventilated stoves and fireplaces, as well as running cars can lead to a build up of CO gas in enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces.
- CO causes illness by decreasing the amount of oxygen present in a person's body.

Symptoms

- The most common symptoms include headache, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, and confusion.
- In severe cases, the person may lose consciousness or die.
- CO poisoning can often be mistaken for other illnesses, such as the flu.
- Often, more than one person in the household will suffer symptoms at the same time.

What to Do

- If a CO leak is suspected, open windows to allow fresh air into the home.
- Get everyone out of the house as quickly as possible.
- Call 9-1-1 if someone is ill.
- Call the poison control hotline at (800) 222-1222 for more information.

Prevention Strategies

To decrease risk of CO poisoning the following tips are recommended:

- Install battery-operated or AC-powered with battery back-up CO alarms near sleeping areas and on every floor of the home.
- Test alarms every month and replace batteries twice a year.
- Have all gas, oil or coal burning appliances inspected by a technician every year to ensure they are working correctly and are properly ventilated.
- Never use a stove for heating.

- Never use a grill, generator or camping stove inside your home, garage or near a window.
- Don't idle a car in an attached garage, even if the garage door is open.
- Install a CO alarm on your motorboat; CO can accumulate anywhere in or around a boat.

Laws and Regulations

- Only 14 states and some local jurisdictions have passed legislation requiring the use of CO alarms in homes. They are:

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| • Alaska | • New Jersey |
| • Connecticut | • New York |
| • Florida | • Rhode Island |
| • Illinois | • Utah |
| • Maryland | • Vermont |
| • Massachusetts | • West Virginia |
| • Minnesota | • Wisconsin |

- Two states, Texas and Tennessee, require CO alarms in daycare centers.
- There is a correlation between cities with CO alarm ordinances and lower death rates from CO.
 - In Los Angeles, where CO alarms are not mandatory, 15 percent of CO exposures were fatal. In Chicago, where CO alarms are required, 0.4 percent of people exposed to carbon monoxide died.