



Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Things you need to know to keep your family safe in the home.

Ryan's Story

It was a typical weekday morning in March of 2016 when my wife and I woke up to our alarms to get ready for work. I woke up with a slight headache, nothing that would cause concern, but my wife was complaining that she did not feel well either. We both went into the bathroom to get ready and my wife was feeling worse by the minute. I got into the shower and, unbeknownst to both of us, the boiler was exhausting carbon monoxide into our basement and it was working its way upstairs. The longer I showered, the worse she felt until she was lying on the floor feeling dizzy, sick to her stomach and had a pounding headache. My headache was worse by the time I got out of the shower and headed for my son's room to get him ready for the day. When I got to his room, I opened the door. Normally he is bouncing up and down, ready to get up, but that day he was still lying down and looking extremely pale. That's when I started to feel that something wasn't right.

I took my son out of his crib and tried to start getting him ready for the day. Still feeling terrible, I called up my mother and told her that none of us were feeling well, and asked if she could come help me and my wife get ready because I had a meeting to get to. She thought this was strange for me to be calling in the morning and brought up the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning. After I hung up the phone, I grabbed my son and took him outside to my truck and strapped him into his car seat. I ran back in to check on my wife, who was slowly trying to get ready, still feeling very miserable. When I saw my parents pull into the driveway, I took off with my son to take him to daycare and get to my meeting. When I dropped him off, I told the daycare provider to keep an eye on him because no one in my house seemed to be feeling well, then I went to my meeting.

An hour or so later, I got a call from my mom who said both my wife and son were at the emergency room getting tested for carbon monoxide poisoning and that I should come, too. My wife's carbon monoxide blood level was 24 ppm and at 25 ppm they will airlift you out of Grand Forks. My carbon monoxide

blood level was only about 17 ppm, which was still high but not nearly as bad as my wife's. Our son, thankfully, had minimal exposure since his door was closed and the furnace had not been running much that morning.

When the fire department arrived at our home with their meter, it read 250 ppm, which is off the charts. A normal cause for concern is 35 ppm or higher. They shut off the power to the house and opened doors and windows, but wouldn't enter the home to investigate until it went down to a safer level.

We did have carbon monoxide detectors in the home at the time, but they never went off. We had them so long that the batteries were most likely not functioning. Our message we want to share is to test your carbon monoxide detectors just as often as you check your smoke detectors. Carbon monoxide is an odorless and colorless gas, which is why we had no indication to be concerned that morning. We now have a portable carbon monoxide detector on every floor, and have combination smoke/carbon monoxide detectors throughout the house. The other message would be to get your furnace, water heater, fireplace or other gas/wood burning appliances inspected and cleaned on an annual basis by a technician. They will clean the equipment and look for faulty or old parts that might need to be replaced.

In March 2016, our family avoided a nearly tragic incident that could have ended very differently. We thought we were doing everything that we needed to do to keep our family safe and yet this carbon monoxide poisoning still happened. We share our story in the hopes of preventing other incidents such as this. Please, use the lessons we learned from our story to take the action steps needed to keep your family safe from this danger posed by carbon monoxide. Those actions may just save your life and your family's as well.

Ryan C.
Grand Forks, ND

For more information contact Safe Kids Grand Forks at 701.780.1489 or visit safekidsgf.com.

**SAFE
K:IDS**
GRAND FORKS

Altru
HEALTH SYSTEM

November is Carbon Monoxide Awareness Month

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that can kill you. CO is produced from burning fuel. CO can build up indoors from faulty furnaces or appliances, generators, fire places, or cars left running in garages. It can poison people and animals that breathe it in. Carbon monoxide poisoning can cause serious side effects and can result in death.

- From 2010 - 2015, 2,244 people were killed from unintentional carbon monoxide poisonings, That's over 400 each year!
- An estimated 21,000 people go to the ER each year because of CO poisoning,
- 4,000 people end up hospitalized each year because of CO poisoning
- Young children are at greater risk of CO poisoning because of their small size.

Carbon Monoxide Detector Tips:

- Install battery operated or battery back-up CO detectors in your home. Test the alarms regularly, and replace every 5-7 years or according to manufacturer's label.
- Place the detector on every level of your home, and especially near sleeping areas.
- Keep detectors at least 15 feet away from fuel- burning appliances.
- Have your heating system, water heater, and any other gas, oil or coal burning appliances serviced by a technician each year.
- Do not use a gas range or oven for heating your home, cabin or camper.
- Do not use a generator inside your home, basement or garage. Keep the generator more than 20 feet away from any door, window or vent.
- When warming your vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately. Do not leave it in the garage with the door open.
- Make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove and fire place are clear of snow and other debris.

Signs and Symptoms

The signs of carbon monoxide poisoning are very similar to the flu. Carbon monoxide poisoning is especially dangerous for people who are sleeping, and the effects of CO poisoning can happen before anyone realizes the problem.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning	Flu
Dizziness	Dizziness
Weakness	Weakness
Headache	Headache
Nausea	Nausea
Fatigue	Fatigue
Vomiting	Vomiting
Chest pain	Chest discomfort
Mental confusion	Sore throat
Shortness of breath	Stuffy nose
Blurred Vision	Fever/Chills
Loss of Consciousness	Muscle or body aches
	Sneezing

What To Do When the Alarm Sounds

- **If the alarm sounds, immediately move outdoors. Make sure everyone in your home is accounted for.**
- **Call 911 or the fire department. They will come with their meter to check the levels of CO.**
- **If you are experiencing any symptoms of CO poisoning, seek medical attention.**