

Winter Safety: Carbon Monoxide

Carbon Monoxide in the Home

Each year, around 180 children die in the US from carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless and odorless gas, which makes it hard to detect. The only way you can know if there is CO in the environment is to have working carbon monoxide alarms on each level and area of your home. Make sure to test them monthly and replace them every 5-7 years or according to the manufacturer's label. Also, make sure to check and clean your fireplace, dryers, furnaces, and gas or wood appliances to prevent carbon monoxide build-up.



Pay attention to the different signs and symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning. They are very similar to those of the flu and include dizziness, weakness, headache, nausea, fatigue, vomiting, chest pain, mental confusion, shortness of breath, blurred vision, and loss of consciousness. Often when people experience these flu-like symptoms, they lie down to rest and that is very dangerous to do if there are high CO levels as they often don't wake up. If you are feeling any of these symptoms, get out of the environment and call emergency personnel right away. Fire departments carry handheld CO detectors and they will come check the levels in your home.

Carbon Monoxide in the Vehicle

Vehicles emit carbon monoxide when they are running so make sure if you start your car to warm it up that you move it out of the garage, especially if you have one attached to the house. Even with the garage doors open, the wind can blow the exhaust back into the home, creating a dangerous situation so pull it out of the garage when it is running.



During the winter, be sure to carry a shovel in your vehicle. If your car goes into a snow packed ditch, you may need that to remove the snow from the exhaust pipe. It would be dangerous to run the vehicle to keep warm if that is blocked.



Altru Health System is proud to serve as the lead agency for Safe Kids Grand Forks. For more information on this and other childhood injury prevention topics, visit safekidsgf.com, call us at 701.780.1489 or email safekids@altru.org.



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