

FAQs About Carbon Monoxide

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is the leading cause of poisoning deaths. Accidental exposures to CO are common.



Q: Are there clues that one is being exposed to carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide is odorless and colorless so there are no warning signs. Having working CO detectors in your home are very important!! Remember that a CO detector is DIFFERENT than a smoke alarm. You need both in your home. The CO detectors should be in the living spaces and not in the basement.



Q: What are common sources of carbon monoxide exposure?

The most common sources of CO include: faulty furnaces, vehicles, charcoal grills, from generators or other gas powered equipment, wood stoves, kerosene heaters and blocked chimneys. This list is not complete and that is why it is important to have CO detectors in your home.



Q: How can you prevent or minimize the risk of being poisoned by CO?

Change the batteries on your CO detectors twice a year. The easiest way to remember to do this is when you change your clocks both in the spring and fall. Have your furnace/water heater serviced each year to be sure that it is functioning correctly. Never use generators inside your house or in an enclosed space. Never keep your car running in your garage, even with the garage door open.



Q: What should you do if you think you are being exposed to CO?

If your carbon monoxide detector is going off, you should leave the home and call 911. If you are experiencing any symptoms such as headache, nausea, vomiting or more severe symptoms such as fainting, you need immediate medical attention. The Poison Center is always available to answer your questions: 1-800-222-1222



Q: How will the doctors treat me if I am poisoned by CO?

They will first give you oxygen. They will then run some tests including a blood test to check how much carbon monoxide is in your system. Depending on your symptoms and/or the blood level of carbon monoxide, they may provide a treatment called hyperbaric oxygen therapy.