



Poison Prevention

Newsletter

Winter 2004



SUNY Upstate Medical University
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Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

By Lee W. Livermore and Laurie McGraw RN, CSPI

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a naturally occurring byproduct of burning oils, natural gases, and other fuels such as wood, coal and charcoal.

Any appliance that burns fossil fuels can be a source of carbon monoxide. Furnaces or boilers typically use either natural gas or propane as a source of fuel. Alternate heating sources are fireplaces, wood burning stoves and kerosene heaters. Hot water heaters, gas clothes dryers and cooking appliances are other sources that potentially could give off carbon monoxide gas. Although properly vented there is a chance of the fumes "leaking" into the house.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that is quickly absorbed by the body. Carbon monoxide causes headaches, dizziness, irritability, and nausea. Often the symptoms of carbon monoxide are mistaken for cold or flu-like symptoms. The majority of people who are killed or injured by carbon monoxide are exposed to high levels over a period of time. Children and the elderly are at a higher risk of carbon monoxide poisoning because of effects on the body.

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You Better Watch out...

BE AWARE OF THE HOLIDAY HAZARDS

By Lee W. Livermore BA, Public Health Educator



Now that the holiday season is upon us, most of us are thinking about everything we need to do to get ready for the holidays. There is one more item to add to your holiday "To Do" list, **BE AWARE OF THE HOLIDAY HAZARDS!**

With shopping, celebrations, gatherings, visitors, gift giving, decorating, and so much else to do, the last thing on your mind may be potential holiday hazards. The fact of the matter is, however, the holiday season is an especially hazardous time for poisonings. Most poisonings are unintentional, and many happen when we are rushed or distracted. Taking a few extra minutes to poison-proof your home is time well spent. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you plan a safe holiday season:

BE AWARE OF THE MANY PRODUCTS THAT CONTAIN ALCOHOL

- **Holiday punch, Eggnog and Hot Buttered Rum Beverages**

These are only a few of the special beverages we have around the house and during the holidays and often they are spiked with alcohol. Although they are pleasant smelling and tasty, alcoholic beverages left unattended are a temptation for children to drink. **Even small amounts of alcohol can be harmful, even fatal, to children.** Children like to imitate adults so remember to clean up after celebrating.

- **Cold medicines, perfumes, cologne and aftershave**

These products often contain high percentages of alcohol and can be very dangerous even in small amounts. **A good rule to remember is the higher the alcohol percentage and the lower the weight of the child, the greater the risk.** Make sure any product or drink with alcohol in it is always kept out of the reach of small children.

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**Poison emergency?
Poison information?
Call Us!
Visit us on the web:
www.cnypoison.org**

Make It A Happy New Year

By Lee W. Livermore BA

Start the New Year off right with a commitment to practicing poison prevention in the home. Here are some easy to follow tips to poison proofing your home today.

- Check the dates on all of the medication you have in the house, both prescription and over-the-counter. If it is out dated either flush it down the toilet or take it to your local pharmacy for safe disposal.
- Investigate and separate – check in the medicine cabinet and in the cupboards to locate any products that can easily be mistaken for another and separate them. Examples are:
 - Toothpaste and products like sports cream, ointments and creams that are similar in size, shape, and colors
 - Liquid cleaning products and beverages
 - Alcoholic beverages and soft drinks
 - Medicines and beauty products
- Get the whole family involved in “discovering” products and places where unintentional exposures can happen



WHEN DO UNINTENTIONAL POISONINGS OCCUR?

- When a product is in use
- When a product is taken out of its original container
- When a child is left unattended, even for a moment



The staff at the Central New York Poison Center wishes you a safe and enjoyable holiday season. If you have any concerns or questions, please call the Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. The phone is always answered by poison information specialists, registered nurses trained in toxicology, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The number is available to health care professionals and the general public for both poison information and emergencies.



Be Aware Of The Holiday Hazards

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- **Don't mix Alcohol and Medicine**

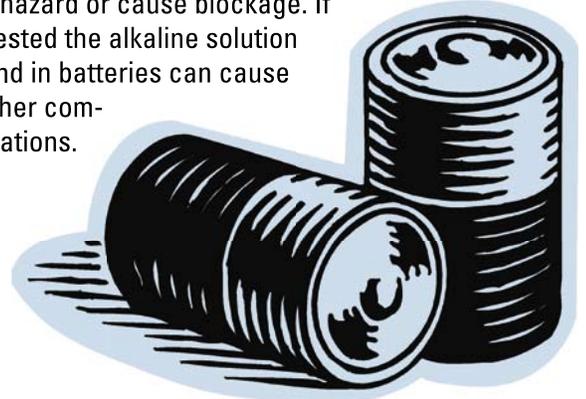
Adults should know better and often make the mistake of combining different cold medicines and even alcohol. It is easy to be persuaded to have "just one" glass of wine or beer to celebrate the holidays. However, please be aware of the dangers when mixing medicine with alcohol.

BE AWARE OF THE MANY PRODUCTS THAT ARE BROUGHT INTO THE HOME

- **Overnight Guests, Relatives and Friends** can unknowingly bring potential hazards with them. Some people carry small amounts of prescription medication, over-the-counter medications, cosmetics and toiletries in their bags and purses. Be wise and advise them to store these items safely out of reach of children and pets.
- **Tobacco products contain nicotine, styrene, and acetone** just to name a few of the chemicals. If a child ingests 1 whole cigarette or 3 cigarette butts in can mean a trip to the emergency room.
- **Holiday Plants such as Mistletoe, Jerusalem cherry and Holly** can be a potential hazard if ingested by small children and pets. Be aware of any plants that

are brought into the home during the holidays. In some cases any part of the plant can be toxic. If you have any questions call the poison center at 1-800-222-1222 just to be safe. **The Specialist in Poison Information can't identify a plant over the phone. However, they will do their best to answer your questions and help with management of an exposure, if you know the name and species of the plant.**

- **Batteries Included** – Chances are the toys neatly wrapped under the Christmas tree contain batteries in some size and shape. Today's technology has made them smaller and more powerful. If you are not careful these batteries can be a choking hazard or cause blockage. If ingested the alkaline solution found in batteries can cause further complications.



Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

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Once inhaled, carbon monoxide inhibits the transport of oxygen throughout the body by mixing with hemoglobin and forming a substance known as carboxyhemoglobin (COHb).

The best way to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning in your home is to install a carbon monoxide detector and to regularly maintain your heating system.

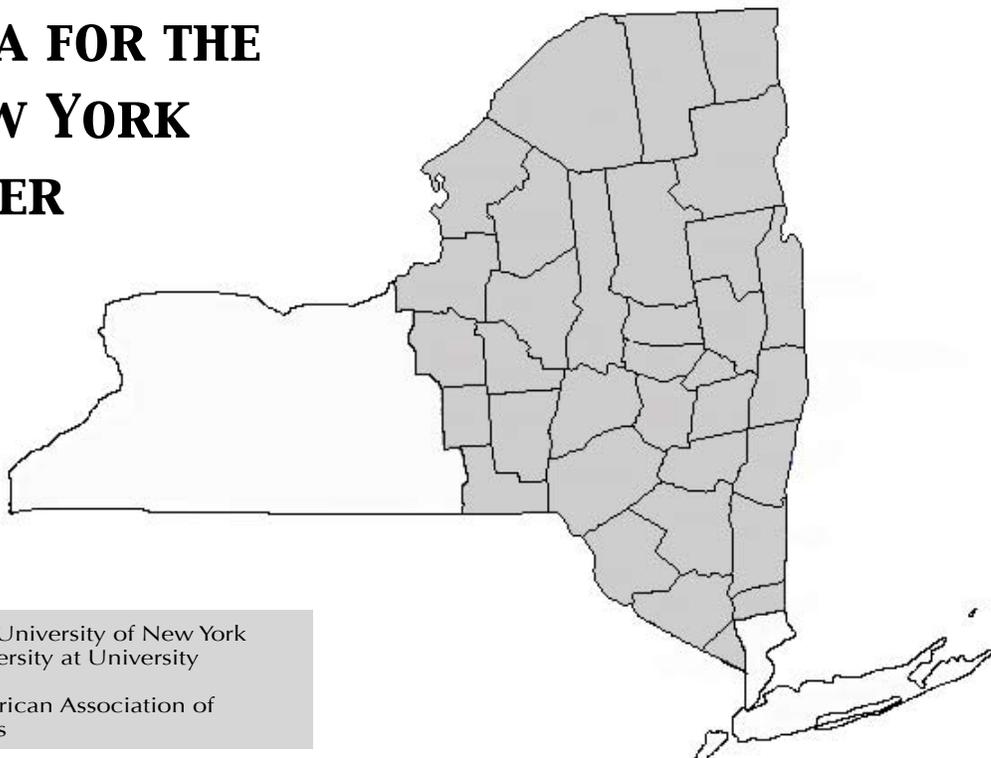


Here are some safety tips to keep you and your family safe:

- Before using your furnace have the chimney or flue checked or cleaned so it is free of leaves, soot, bird's nests and other
- Have fireplaces, wood burning stoves and space heaters checked and are in good working condition according to the manufacturer's instructions. Make sure there is proper ventilation and plenty of fresh air when using these devices.
- Never leave the car or any vehicle running in a closed garage. It can quickly produce enough carbon monoxide to harm anyone in the garage or adjacent rooms in the house.
- Never burn coal or charcoal in a closed space, even with the door open.
- NEVER, use your gas range or oven to heat your home even during power outages. Carbon monoxide levels build up quickly

For more information visit <http://www.kiddesafety.com/CarbonMonoxide.shtml>

CALLING AREA FOR THE CENTRAL NEW YORK POISON CENTER



A Service of the State University of New York
Upstate Medical University at University
Hospital, Syracuse.
A Member of the American Association of
Poison Control Centers

Unintentional Poisoning Can Happen To You..At Any Age!

To receive your **FREE** telephone stickers, magnets, and information brochures, dial 1-800-222-1222 ask for the Health Educator at The Central New York Poison Center.