



CARBON MONOXIDE: EXPOSURE AND PREVENTION

WHAT IS CARBON MONOXIDE?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines carbon monoxide (CO) as:

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless, poisonous gas, often called the invisible killer. The greatest sources of CO to outdoor air are cars, trucks and other vehicles or machinery that burn fuels. A variety of items in your home such as unvented kerosene and gas space heaters, leaking chimneys and furnaces, and gas stoves also release CO and can affect air quality indoors.

Vehicles or generators running in an attached garage can also produce dangerous levels of carbon monoxide.

By being aware of carbon monoxide exposure and knowing the steps to prevent it, you can save lives.

WHERE DOES CARBON MONOXIDE COME FROM?

Carbon monoxide is produced whenever you burn fuel of any type whether in engines, furnaces, fireplaces, grills, stoves, or gas ranges. Since you can't see, taste, or smell carbon monoxide, the gas can reach dangerous levels undetected, especially in enclosed spaces. This is the reason you should never leave your vehicle running in the garage or try to heat your home with a grill or a portable gas stove when your electricity is out. Each year, exposure to carbon monoxide gas causes hundreds of accidental deaths and makes thousands more ill.



SYMPTOMS OF CARBON MONOXIDE EXPOSURE

The CDC reports the most common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Upset stomach
- Vomiting
- Chest pain
- Confusion
- Flu-like symptoms

High levels of exposure can lead to passing out or death, especially if you are asleep or drunk.

If you think you are suffering from carbon monoxide exposure, get into fresh air at once, contact emergency personnel, and seek medical help.

STEPS OF PREVENTION

What steps can you take to prevent your exposure to carbon monoxide?

1. Install a carbon monoxide detector in your indoor space.
2. Each year, have a qualified technician service your heating system, water heater, and other appliances fueled by gas, oil, or coal.
3. Have your chimney serviced each year by a qualified technician to prevent CO buildup.
4. Never use a charcoal grill or portable gas stove indoors.
5. Never use a gas range or oven for indoor heating.
6. Don't use a generator inside your home, basement, garage, or less than 20 feet from any window, door, or vent. Experts recommend using an extension cord that is longer than 20 feet to keep the generator at a safe distance.
7. Never leave a gas-powered motor running (car, truck, motorcycle, lawn mower, etc.) running in the garage even if the garage door is open.

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS USAGE AND PLACEMENT

Carbon monoxide detectors are very similar to smoke detectors in appearance but serve a different purpose. They give warning of carbon monoxide rather than indicating the presence of smoke or fire. As with smoke detectors, a good rule of thumb is to change carbon monoxide detector batteries when you change your clocks each year. Test your detectors monthly and follow all manufacturer's instructions regarding the installation and maintenance of your detector.



The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends placing a detector on each floor of your home. Place an alarm near your sleeping areas with the alarm loud enough to wake you up when sleeping.

Carbon Monoxide exposure causes many accidental deaths and hospitalizations each year. It is important for all Kentuckians to be aware, knowledgeable, and ready to take action to reduce carbon monoxide exposure in their homes and indoor living spaces. By reducing exposure to carbon monoxide, you and your loved ones can breathe easier.

REFERENCES:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/co/faqs.htm#:~:text=CO%20is%20found%20in%20fumes,and%20animals%20who%20breathe%20it.>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/co/guidelines.htm>
- <https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/where-should-i-place-carbon-monoxide-detector>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/co/guidelines.htm>

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