



# **Carbon Monoxide**

The “Silent killer”



## **CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING**

### **You could be at risk.**

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless, and non-irritating gas that is a product of incomplete burning of carbon-containing materials such as natural gas, propane, gasoline, wood, and charcoal. The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), reports an estimated 1,500 people die annually due to accidental carbon monoxide poisoning. In addition, about 10,000 people lose a day of work or seek medical attention each year because of carbon monoxide poisoning. As people attempt to conserve heat by making their homes “airtight,” the incidence of poisoning increases.

Carbon monoxide impairs the ability of blood to carry oxygen. The brain and heart are very sensitive to lack of oxygen. People with heart and lung disease are at higher risk of developing problems from carbon monoxide, as are children and old people. The unborn child is also very sensitive to carbon monoxide poisoning.

### **Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning:**

- Drowsiness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Irritability
- Difficulty thinking
- Blurred vision
- Coma

Note: Flu-like symptoms can be due to carbon monoxide poisoning. Beware of several family members complaining of flu symptoms the same day.

### **Sources of carbon monoxide:**

- Furnaces
- Gas water heaters
- Kerosene or propane space heaters
- Gasoline-powered engines
- Fires
- Charcoal grills

## **People at risk for carbon monoxide poisoning:**

- People in homes with malfunctioning heating appliances
- Drivers and passengers in automobiles with leaky exhaust systems
- People in fish houses
- Firefighters
- Auto mechanics
- Workers at loading facilities
- Warehouse storage workers
- Steel and other industrial workers

## **What to do:**

Act quickly to remove person from environment.

Call the Poison Center 1-800-222-1222 for further information.

Call 911 if someone is seriously ill.



## **How to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:**

**INSTALL A CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR** in your home. Choose a detector that has an audible alarm and a digital readout of the carbon monoxide concentration. Place the detector near the bedroom. Detectors are available at hardware, discount, and building supply stores.

**PROVIDE ADEQUATE VENTILATION** when using wood stoves, space heaters, and fireplaces. Make sure all flame-burning appliances are properly installed and operated and have routine maintenance.

**MAKE SURE** your furnace has adequate intake of outside air.

**DO NOT USE** ovens and gas ranges for heating purposes.

**DO NOT OPERATE** gasoline-powered engines in confined areas, such as garages or basements.

**DO NOT BURN** charcoal inside a home, cabin, recreational vehicle, or tent.

**HAVE ONLY A QUALIFIED TECHNICIAN** install or convert fuel-burning equipment from one type of fuel to another.