

# Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odourless, colourless and tasteless toxic gas. Once inhaled into your lungs it enters the bloodstream and rapidly accumulates in the blood. CO reduces the blood's ability to carry oxygen throughout our bodies which can cause serious health effects. CO exposure is serious and can result in sudden illness (low levels) or death (high levels). CO is undetectable by the human senses. All people and animals are at risk for CO poisoning. Certain groups: unborn babies, infants, and people with chronic heart disease, anemia, or respiratory problems are more susceptible to its effects.

## How is CO produced?

CO is produced any time a fossil fuel is burned in a furnace, vehicle, generator, grill, or elsewhere. CO from these sources can build up in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces.

## What are the symptoms of CO exposure?

Health effects of CO depend on the CO concentration, length of exposure, and individual health condition.

Concentration	Symptoms
Low	<b><i>Similar to the flu without fever.</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Headache</li><li>• Fatigue</li><li>• Shortness of breath</li><li>• Nausea</li><li>• Dizziness</li><li>• Chest pain (if suffer from heart disease)</li></ul>
Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Angina</li><li>• Impaired vision</li><li>• Reduced brain function</li></ul>
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mental Confusion</li><li>• Vomiting</li><li>• Loss of muscular coordination</li><li>• Death</li></ul>
<b><i>LEAVE YOUR HOME IMMEDIATELY IF YOU SUSPECT CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING. SEEK PROMPT MEDICAL ATTENTION!!</i></b>	

## How can I prevent CO poisoning?

- Install and regularly test a CO detector that displays the certification mark from Canadian Standards Association (CSA) or Underwriters Laboratories of Canada (ULC).
- Make sure appliances are installed and operated according to the manufacturer's instructions and building codes.
- Have your heating system professionally inspected and serviced annually to ensure proper operation.
- Never service fuel-burning appliances without proper knowledge, skill and tools. Always refer to the owner's manual when performing minor adjustments or servicing fuel-burning equipment.

- Never operate a portable generator or any other gasoline powered tool in or near an enclosed space.
- Never use portable fuel-burning camping equipment inside a home, garage, vehicle or tent.
- Never burn charcoal inside a home, garage, vehicle, or tent.
- DO NOT let vehicles idle in the garage.
- Never run gas-powered lawnmowers, trimmers or snow blowers in the garage.
- Never use gas appliances such as ranges, ovens, or clothes dryers to heat your home.
- Never operate unvented fuel-burning appliances in any room where people are sleeping. In addition, when using a wood burning fireplace, open both the flue and fresh air intake for adequate ventilation.
- Do not cover the bottom of natural gas or propane ovens with aluminum foil
- During home renovations, ensure that appliance vents and chimneys are not blocked by tarps or debris.

### **How can a CO detector help keep my family healthy and safe?**

- When the alarm sounds on your CO detector, leave your home immediately and move to fresh air. Do not try to locate the source of CO.
- CO detectors can detect when levels are becoming harmful.
- At a minimum, install CO detectors in the hallway outside each sleeping area. Make sure that the detector cannot be covered by furniture or draperies.
- Once outside, call for emergency services.
- DO NOT return to your home until the source of the CO has been identified by a professional and the problem has been corrected.
- A CO detector is different from a smoke detector. Ensure both a CO and smoke detector is available at home.
- Remove drapes, rugs, and furniture from the area. Cover the objects which can't be moved, including the floor, with heavy plastic. Seal heating vents (both supply and return). Protect the entrance to the working area with plastic to contain any generated dust. Use a water spray with a small amount of detergent to wet all surfaces to contain any dust during renovation or clean-up.

### **Where can I find more information?**

For more information on carbon monoxide and to speak to a public health professional call *Your Health Connection* Monday to Friday at 705-721-7520 (1-877-721-7520) or visit the following websites.

[Health Canada](#)

[Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation](#)

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#)