



Carbon Monoxide Safety

Carbon Monoxide: What you need to know

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless gas. It is extremely dangerous when levels build up in a home, garage, or other enclosed building.

Carbon monoxide appears after the incomplete burning of fuels and is present from multiple sources, such as wood-burning stoves, kerosene lanterns, gas-fired appliances, charcoal grills, and vehicle exhausts.

Everyone is at risk, and the symptoms vary depending on the level of carbon monoxide the person has encountered.

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Symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Impaired vision and coordination
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Flu-like symptoms

All symptoms clear up after leaving the home. At very high levels of carbon monoxide, results can be fatal within minutes.

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Mercy Injury Prevention Program recommends that every home have a carbon monoxide alarm.

A professional should inspect all fuel-burning appliances including furnaces, stoves, water heaters, space heaters and fireplaces to detect leaks of deadly carbon monoxide. The inspection should be done every year.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms

- The alarm needs to be installed per the manufacturer's recommendations in a central location outside of sleeping areas.
- Test the CO alarm monthly and replace the unit per the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Ensure that everyone in the home knows the difference in sounds of the CO alarm and smoke detector.
- CO alarms are not smoke detectors. CO alarms only detect carbon monoxide. A separate smoke detector is needed in the home to detect smoke from fires.
- If the CO alarm sounds, exit the area to a location of fresh air and call for help. Do not return to the area until emergency personnel inform that it is safe.



How to prevent Carbon Monoxide buildup

- Never use your range, oven, or charcoal grill to heat your home.
- Never keep your car running inside the garage. Even if the door is open, the normal air circulation will not provide enough fresh air to reliably prevent the buildup of carbon monoxide.
- Never run a generator inside a building. A toxic buildup of exhaust can lead to dangerous levels of CO. Generators need to be operated outside in a well-vented location away from doors and windows.
- When using a fireplace, ensure that the flue is open for proper ventilation.



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