



Carbon Monoxide (CO) can be a deadly gas produced from the burning of any natural gas, propane, oil, wood, coal, or other carbon-based fuels. You cannot see, smell or taste this gas. Early signs of CO poisoning are headaches, dizziness, nausea, weakness, or confusion. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an estimated 100,000 people are treated annually in hospital emergency rooms with carbon monoxide poisoning and an average of 420 people die from the exposure. The more common sources of CO around the home are gasoline-powered automobiles and equipment, or natural-gas or propane clothes dryers, grills, water heaters, stoves and furnaces. Also, many homeowners use wood burning or propane fire places for additional heat that produce CO. Basically, if something burns any type of fuel it produces carbon monoxide. A less common cause of CO poisoning is exposure to tobacco smoke. The risk of sickness is much higher for smokers including those exposed to second-hand smoke. Harm from CO poisoning is entirely preventable by knowing the signs of exposure and how to prevent it. Below are just a few things to do around your home to prevent CO poisoning.

1. Purchase a carbon monoxide detector for every floor of the home. These detectors work much like a smoke detector, alarming when CO levels begin to rise in your home—usually before you start sensing symptoms. With a low CO level (50 ppm), it may take up to eight hours for the alarm to go off. Higher carbon monoxide levels (over 150 ppm) can trigger an alarm within minutes.
2. If you have gas appliances or a gas furnace, schedule an annual inspection from a qualified gas technician. They have the equipment to detect possible leaks or malfunctioning components that produce CO.
3. Never run an automobile, lawn mower, chain saw, power washer, generator or any other gas-powered machines indoors or in enclosed spaces like the garage. Levels of CO will rise to dangerous levels very quickly in these situations.
4. Avoid using grills, lanterns, or portable camping stoves inside enclosed spaces.
5. Never use a wood or gas powered stove or fireplace without being properly installed and vented to the outside.
6. Smokers have at least 3 times the levels of CO in their blood than non-smokers. CO in the blood prevents oxygen-carrying molecules from reaching the heart, brain and other vital organs. It's very important for your health that these organs receive oxygen. CO poisoning is another reason to stop smoking.
7. If you suspect CO poisoning?
 - OPEN all windows and doors.
 - GET OUT of the building and into the fresh air.
 - CALL the fire department from outside the building.
 - CALL the gas company from outside the building.
 - CALL 911 if you or someone else is experiencing symptoms, or take the ill person to the ER.

Most carbon monoxide poisonings occur during the winter. Now is the time to follow these steps to keep you and your family safe. For more information regarding this topic contact the Meigs County Health Department or visit the CDC at www.cdc.gov.

