

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Every year more than 400 people in the U.S. die from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning and over 20,000 people visit the emergency room. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, toxic gas that is produced when anything is burned. Gas and oil furnaces, water heaters, fireplaces, and wood burning and gas stoves are sources in the home. The only way to know if you are being exposed to carbon monoxide is by using a detector.

Recognizing Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain and confusion.
- Exposure to carbon monoxide can cause loss of consciousness and death.
- If carbon monoxide poisoning is suspected, seek fresh air and consult a health care professional right away.

Preventing Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Check heating systems, chimney flues, and gas appliances every year. Get them cleaned and serviced as needed by qualified heating/appliance contractors.
- Use caution with kerosene or gas space heaters. Use vented space heaters whenever possible, and always make sure they are cleaned and inspected. Never use a gas range or oven to heat a home.
- Use charcoal grills, hibachis, or portable camping stoves outside your home, garage, basement, tent or camper. Using them indoors or in an enclosed space can produce dangerous levels of carbon monoxide.
- Never run a portable generator or any gasoline-powered engine inside a basement, garage, camper or other enclosed structure, even if doors and windows are open.
- Never leave the motor running in a vehicle parked in an enclosed or partially enclosed space, such as a garage.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- Every home should have at least one battery-operated carbon monoxide detector. Oregon law requires that all rental housing, new homes, and homes for sale have carbon monoxide detectors.
- A carbon monoxide detector is not a substitute for ensuring your heating system is properly inspected and serviced.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors in all bedrooms.
- Check the detector's batteries twice a year.

Additional Resources

CDC: Carbon Monoxide Poisoning After a Disaster
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/carbonmonoxide.asp>

CDC: Preventing Carbon Monoxide Poisoning After an Emergency
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/cofacts.asp>

External Partner Resources

Oregon Office of State Fire Marshall, Carbon Monoxide
Phone: 503-378-3473
http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/CommEd_CO_Program.shtml

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Indoor Air
<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/coftsht.html>

U.S. Product Safety Commission
The "Invisible" Killer Brochure:
<http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PUBS/5010.html>