



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development • Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control



HEALTHY HOMES

Healthy Families | Healthy Children

CARBON MONOXIDE

"You can't see or smell carbon monoxide, but at high levels it can kill a person in minutes."

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Did you know...?

- Over 500 people in the United States die from accidental carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning each year.¹
- Over 10,000 people seek medical attention for CO poisoning each year.²
- Infants, people with lung or heart disease, or people with anemia are more seriously affected.

What is it?

Carbon monoxide is a gas that cannot be seen, smelled or tasted, and can be fatal when breathed. The symptoms that occur with carbon monoxide poisoning, such as a headache, can be similar to those of common illnesses. These similarities often lead to an incorrect diagnosis, such as flu, allergies, migraine headache, stroke.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is caused by:

- Operating fuel-burning products such as electrical generators without proper ventilation. Read manufacturers' instructions before operating any fuel-burning device in your home.
- Car exhaust entering the home from the garage.
- Combustion equipment such as furnaces or hot water heaters that are not working properly or have blocked exhaust systems.

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Do not run your car in a closed garage.



What can you do?

- Make sure fuel burning appliances are installed by a professional and are working properly.
- Never idle your car in the garage, even if the garage door is open to the outside.
- Never use a gas range or oven to heat a home.
- Choose vented appliances (like gas fireplaces) whenever possible.
- Have your heating systems and chimneys inspected and cleaned by a qualified technician every year.
- Replace dirty air filters on heating and cooling systems.
- Never run a generator, pressure washer, or any gasoline-powered engine inside a basement, garage, or other enclosed structure, even if the doors or windows are open, unless the equipment is professionally installed and vented.
- Never use a charcoal grill, hibachi, fuel lantern, or portable camping stove inside a home, tent, or camper.
- Make sure there is good ventilation at all times. Install proper ventilation for interior combustion appliances, and consider installing air exchangers or air conditioning for "tightly-sealed" homes.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors near sleeping areas and replace batteries on a regular basis.

For more information...

Visit HUD's website at www.hud.gov/healthyhomes for more information about addressing health hazards in homes or to learn if HUD has a Healthy Homes program in your community. From this website, you can download a copy of "Help Yourself to A Healthy Home" for more practical steps you can take to make your home a healthy home.

Other Federal Resources

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/co

US Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/iaq

Ask your doctor or contact your local or state department of health.

Install carbon monoxide detectors in your home.



¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Fact Sheet" www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/carbonmonoxide/cofaq.htm August 25, 2004

²Community Environmental Health Resource Center (CEHRC) "Carbon Monoxide Background Materials" www.cehrc.org/tools/carbon/cobacmat.cfm August 25, 2004