

City of Philadelphia

Department
of
Public Health

Public Health Services

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CARBON MONOXIDE (CO)



- *This booklet will help you understand*
- *Carbon Monoxide (CO):*
- *What it is*
- *What symptoms to look for*
- *Health effects*
- *What causes it and how to prevent it in your home or auto*
- *What to do in an emergency*

What is CO?

- Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an invisible, odorless gas that can kill.
- CO is produced by burning any fuel. Therefore, any fuel-burning appliance in your home is a potential CO source.
- Cars, gas tools and lawnmowers that are running while in a garage or shed are other sources.

Symptoms of CO POISONING:

The initial symptoms of CO are similar to the flu but without a fever:

- DIZZINESS
- FATIGUE
- EXCESSIVE YAWNING
- HEADACHE
- NAUSEA
- IRREGULAR BREATHING
- RINGING IN THE EARS OR SEEING SPOTS



Fetuses, infants, elderly people and people with anemia or with a history of heart or respiratory disease can be especially susceptible.

Health effects of CO POISONING.

The Health effects of Carbon Monoxide (CO) range from headaches and breathing difficulties to death.

The Health effects may show up immediately after exposure or occur after being exposed for a long time.

The effects depend upon the type and amount and the length of time of exposure.

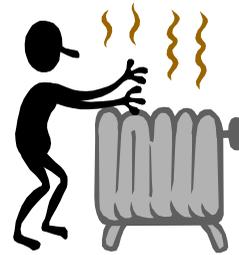
Breathing low levels can cause fatigue and increase chest pain in people with chronic heart disease.

Even if you are healthy, high levels of carbon monoxide can kill you within a short period of time.

What are the causes of CO in your home or auto?

CO is produced during the burning of fuels, and particularly under conditions that favor incomplete combustion.

In the home, any fuel burning appliance is a potential source of CO. Therefore, it is important that furnaces, hot water heaters, gas ranges, gas dryers, gas space heaters and kerosene heaters be properly operated and maintained to reduce the risk of CO poisoning, a serious environmental health hazard.



BE on the lookout for:

- Yellow flames, which indicate improper burning. Blue flames are normal.
- Poorly ventilated heater rooms.
- Airtight building areas (for example, plastic on windows).
- Blocked chimney or heater discharge to the outside of your home.
- Blocked dryer exhaust to the outside.
- Auto, lawnmower or gas tools exhaust in a closed garage or shed.
- During heavy snow, blocked auto exhaust.
- Any type of damaged exhaust system.



What to do in an EMERGENCY:

Play it safe, get fresh air immediately. Move everyone away from the appliances and into a well ventilated area and get emergency help.

If anyone loses consciousness, call 911 and get emergency medical treatment.

If you suspect a gas leak or CO problem from a gas appliance, call the Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW) 24 hour emergency Hotline at (215)235-1212.

Carbon monoxide detectors are widely available in stores. You may want to consider buying one as a back-up **BUT NOT AS A REPLACEMENT** for proper use and maintenance of your fuel burning appliances.

If your CO detector alarm goes off:

- Make sure it is the CO detector and not your smoke or fire detector.
- Check to see if any member of the household is experiencing symptoms of CO Poisoning, if they are, get them out of the house immediately and seek medical attention. Tell the doctor that you suspect CO poisoning.
- Have a qualified technician inspect your fuel burning appliances and chimneys to make sure they are operating correctly and that there is nothing blocking the fumes from being vented outside of the house.