

Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning

Get the Facts! From the Blue Ridge Poison Center at UVA Health



Carbon monoxide (CO) is an invisible, odorless gas produced when fuel is burned. Common sources include: automobiles; gasoline-powered lawn equipment and other tools; wood stoves and fireplaces; charcoal or gas grills; and furnaces or other appliances that burn oil or gas.

Nearly 500 people each year die from CO poisoning, and many hundreds more are injured by it. The *number one cause of deaths* from CO poisoning is portable power generators which have been placed too close to a home.

How does CO make people sick?

When someone breathes CO into their lungs, it passes into the bloodstream and binds strongly to red blood cells. This makes the red blood cells unable to carry any oxygen to the brain, organs, and other parts of the body.

Since you cannot see or smell CO gas, you may not be aware that you are breathing it. The earliest symptoms are often headache, nausea, and drowsiness, which may be mistaken for the flu or other illness. Symptoms can also include chest pain, dizziness, and loss of consciousness.



The Blue Ridge Poison Center at UVA Health
1-800-222-1222 www.brpc.virginia.edu
Treatment. Education. Prevention.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning (continued from front)

Protect Your Family:

- Place your portable power generator at least 20 feet away from your home. Avoid enclosed spaces like attics, porches, basements, or garages.
- Pull your car or motorcycle out of the garage to warm up the engine.
- Have your furnace and chimneys professionally cleaned and checked each year for leaks or worn parts.
- Use gas and charcoal grills outdoors in a well-ventilated spot, not in an enclosed space like your home, a porch, barn, or tent.
- Only use your oven or stovetop for cooking, not for heating the house.

Carbon monoxide is a sneaky poison. Breathing very high concentrations can cause loss of consciousness in only a few breaths. A person who survives CO poisoning may suffer permanent damage to the brain or other organs. Be prepared: **INSTALL CO DETECTORS** in your home. If the alarm sounds—or if you suspect CO poisoning—immediately move all people and pets to fresh air and call for help.



WE CAN HELP. Specially trained nurses, doctors, and pharmacists are standing by 24 hours a day, every day. Call the **Blue Ridge Poison Center: 1-800-222-1222**. Free and confidential.

Scan the code, save the number. You could save a life.