

Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas. You cannot see or smell carbon monoxide. This invisible gas can build up indoors and cause sudden illness or death for people and pets who breathe it.

Major sources

Burning fuel of various kinds creates carbon monoxide. This includes charcoal, gasoline engines running in garages or sheds, unvented kerosene heaters, propane heaters, tobacco smoke, fireplaces, woodstoves, natural gas appliances and gasoline powered generators.

Health effects

Health effects include headache, tiredness, dizziness, nausea, weakness, confusion or pets acting strangely. Very high levels of carbon monoxide cause loss of consciousness and even death.

How to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning

- Every home should have a battery-powered carbon monoxide alarm.
 - Leave your home immediately if your carbon monoxide alarm goes off or you notice symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.
 - Call 9-1-1 from outside your home. If you live in an apartment, alert your neighbors, but do not go into their apartment. Carbon monoxide can move between apartments.
- If you use a generator please follow all manufacturer's instructions carefully and:
 - Secure your generator to prevent theft.
 - Have a battery operated carbon monoxide alarm.
 - Do not put a generator in a garage, even with the door open.
 - Do not put a generator near any window, including those of your neighbors.
 - Generators should be at least 20 feet away from buildings. Even at 20 feet away, air flow patterns could still blow carbon monoxide into homes through attic vents, windows, or doors, so it's very important to have a working carbon monoxide detector inside the home. Get more tips on [using a generator during a power outage](#).
- If you use a charcoal or gas grill for cooking:
 - Do not bring the grill or stove inside or in the garage.
 - Do not use near an open door or window.
- If you use a fireplace or woodstove:
 - Keep flues and vents clear of debris that the wind could blow and create a fire hazard.
 - Get a professional inspection of fireplace or woodstoves every year.
- If you use appliances that operate on natural gas or oil:
 - Have your gas or oil furnace, stove, dryer and water heater serviced by a professional once a year..
 - Make sure that these appliances are vented to the outside.
 - Call a certified technician if the tip of your gas stove burner flame is yellow or orange instead of blue.
- If you have an attached garage:
 - Do not run a car or gas powered engine in a garage for any length of time.