



FIRE PREVENTION TIP SHEET CARBON MONOXIDE (CO)

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a gas you cannot see, taste or smell. If you breathe too much of it, it can kill you within minutes. It is called the “invisible killer” because it can render you unconscious before you realize something is happening to you.

Carbon monoxide is produced by the incomplete burning any type of fuel or combustible material.

High levels of carbon monoxide can result from vehicles idling inside garages, malfunctioning or improperly vented water heaters, clothes dryers, furnaces and other heating appliances, portable generators and more.

Carbon monoxide poisoning

Carbon monoxide poisoning occurs when you breathe in air that contains too much carbon monoxide. It replaces the oxygen in your blood, which will cause your organs to fail.

Early symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include the following:

- ▶ headache
- ▶ dizziness
- ▶ nausea

As the levels of carbon monoxide build up in your blood, symptoms get worse and include the following:

- ▶ confusion and drowsiness
- ▶ fast breathing, fast heartbeat or chest pain
- ▶ vision problems
- ▶ seizures

Tips to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning

- ▶ Install carbon monoxide alarms outside each sleeping area, on every level of your home and in other locations as required. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for placement and mounting height.
 - ▶ [View our smoke and CO alarms tip sheet to learn more.](#)

- ▶ Remove your vehicle from the garage immediately after starting it. Do not run a vehicle or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if your garage door is open. Exhaust from your vehicle can leak back into your home even if the door is fully open.
- ▶ Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not covered with snow.
- ▶ Only use generators, patio-heaters, barbecues, etc. in well-ventilated areas outdoors, away from windows, doors and vent openings.
- ▶ Have chimneys and fuel-burning heating equipment professionally inspected every year.
- ▶ Make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace are not blocked and are in good condition. After each snowfall, clear them off so snow does not build up.
- ▶ Open the flue for your fireplace prior to using it for ventilation
- ▶ Do not use your oven to heat your home.

What do to if you've been exposed to carbon monoxide

- ▶ Ensure you and all others **immediately** get out of the home safely to a fresh air location outdoors.
- ▶ Call 9-1-1 from the fresh air location.
- ▶ Remain there until emergency personnel declare that it is safe to enter the home.

*Information contained in this tip sheet has been modified from **Alberta Health Services, Health Canada, and the National Fire Protection Association.***

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