

# Carbon Monoxide: The Silent Killer

You cannot see it, smell it or taste it, but carbon monoxide can be deadly to you and your family. A toxic gas released from fuel-burning household appliances, such as gas heaters and stoves, carbon monoxide in high levels can kill with little warning.

At low levels, carbon monoxide can cause flu-like symptoms that quickly can become serious. At high levels, those exposed can lose consciousness and die within minutes. Carbon monoxide can be especially dangerous for pregnant women and their unborn babies, infants and people with anemia or a history of heart disease.

Reports of carbon monoxide poisoning increase during the winter months when people begin to use gas heaters. When properly maintained, gas appliances release very small amounts of carbon monoxide.

## PROTECT YOUR FAMILY FROM POISONING

Follow these tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to reduce your family's risk of carbon monoxide exposure:

- Have your heating system, water heater and any other gas, oil or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year. Do not use portable flameless chemical heaters (catalytic) indoors. Although these heaters do not have a flame, they burn gas and can cause carbon monoxide to build up inside your home, cabin or camper.
- If you smell an odor coming from your gas refrigerator's cooling unit, have an expert service it. An odor from the cooling unit of your gas refrigerator can mean you have a defect in the cooling unit. It also could be giving off carbon monoxide.
- When purchasing gas equipment, buy only equipment carrying the seal of a national testing agency, such as the American Gas Association or Underwriters' Laboratories. Install a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector near the bedrooms in your home and check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall, the same time you replace the batteries in your smoke detector.

- Make sure furnaces, gas appliances and gas or kerosene space heaters are always properly ventilated.
- Have chimneys and flues checked to make sure they are not blocked by debris (like squirrels' or birds' nests or leaves) that could cause hazardous fumes to become trapped inside your home.
- Only use charcoal grills, camping stoves, lanterns, hibachis, generators, gas-powered tools and equipment (like lawn mowers, snow blowers, weed trimmers, chainsaws, pressure washers) outside—never inside your home, garage, basement, any enclosed area (like a camper or tent), or near a window, door or vent that could draw the fumes inside.
- Never use gas ovens or gas ranges to heat your home.
- Never leave a car engine running in a garage, even if the door to the outside is open, as fumes build up quickly. Never sleep in a parked car with the engine running.

## CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING WARNING SIGNS

- Sleepiness
- Blurred vision
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Shortness of breath
- Lightheadedness/confusion

If you or anyone in your household experiences these symptoms, call 911 immediately—especially if more than one person shows symptoms or if symptoms improve once outdoors. If possible, get outside. If you cannot leave, turn off gas appliances and open all windows and doors. A blood test can determine carbon monoxide exposure.