

Holiday and Seasonal

Carbon Monoxide: The Silent Killer

Colorless, Odorless Killer Claims Hundreds of Lives Each Year, More Than 20,000 Visits ERs

Emergency physicians see the tragic consequences of carbon monoxide poisoning each year, especially during the winter months when people begin using heating devices and stoves to keep warm.

“This colorless, odorless gas is deadly if you don’t take precautionary steps or notice the symptoms,” said Dr. Sandra Schneider of the American College of Emergency Physicians. “Thinking about it now and acting to prevent the risks of carbon monoxide poisoning may save your life and the lives of those around you.”

Each year, more than 400 people in the United States die from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Another 20,000 people visit emergency departments, with more than 4,000 needing to be hospitalized. Emergency physicians urge everyone to spot the potential signs of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Symptoms Of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Include:

- **Headache**
- **Dizziness**
- **Weakness**
- **Nausea**
- **Vomiting**
- **Chest pain**
- **Confusion**

Carbon Monoxide poisoning often is difficult to diagnose because the symptoms mimic other illness.

“If you get bad headaches or suffer from any of these symptoms, you may easily confuse them with the flu,” said Dr, Schneider. “People should be concerned about the possible presence of carbon monoxide if more than one person living

or working together develops these symptoms simultaneously over a short period of time.”

Ways to Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning:

- Have gas appliances installed or maintained by a qualified professional.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector on each level of your home, especially near sleeping areas.
- Never leave a motor running of a vehicle parked in an enclosed garage.
- Do not use portable flameless chemical heaters indoors. Even if they don't have flames, they burn case and release carbon monoxide in you homes, cabins or campers.
- Never use a charcoal grill indoors.
- Make sure all gas appliances (grills, camp stoves, power tools, generators, etc.) are properly vented so that carbon monoxide does not build in homes, cabins or campers.
- Turn on the exhaust fan over your gas stove when using it.
- Never burn anything in a stove or fireplace that isn't vented.
- Have your chimney checked and cleaned every year.
- Make sure fireplace flues are open during use.

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Submitted by the Child Fatality Review Committee