



## **CARBON MONOXIDE AND HOW IT CAN AFFECT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY**

Carbon monoxide is a dangerous, poisonous gas that kills hundreds of people each year and injures many more.

It is often referred to as the silent killer because it has no odour or taste and cannot be seen. Like oxygen, CO enters the body through the lungs during the normal breathing process. It competes with oxygen by replacing it in the red blood cells, thereby reducing the flow of oxygen to the heart, brain and other vital organs. In high concentrations,

CO can kill in minutes.

Many cases of reported carbon monoxide poisoning indicate that while victims are aware they are not feeling well, they become disorientated and unable to save themselves by either exiting the building or calling for assistance.

Exposure during sleep is particularly dangerous because the victim usually does not wake up. Symptoms of CO poisoning

The following symptoms may be related to CO poisoning which all household members should be made aware of:

- Mild Exposure: Slight headache, nausea, vomiting, fatigue (often described as 'flu-like' symptoms).
- Medium Exposure: Severe throbbing headache, drowsiness, confusion, fast heart rate.
- Extreme Exposure: Unconsciousness, convulsions, cardio respiratory failure, death.

Should you suspect CO may be affecting you or your family, open the doors and windows of your property to ventilate, turn off your appliances and evacuate the premises. At this time the authorities should be contacted to locate the source of the carbon monoxide before re-entering the building. Medical attention should be sought for anyone suffering the effects of CO poisoning.

Common sources of CO

- Oil and gas boilers
- Portable generators
- Oil or solid fuel cookers
- Gas or paraffin heaters
  - Barbecues
- Clogged chimneys

- Wood or gas fireplaces
  - Cigarette smoke
  - Gas appliances
- Any fossil fuel burning appliance

The CO detector should not be seen as a substitute for the proper installation, use and maintenance of fuel-burning appliances (including appropriate ventilation and exhaust systems), nor the sweeping of chimneys.

Do not:

- **IGNORE ANY WARNING FROM YOUR CO DETECTOR!**
  - Burn charcoal inside your home, caravan, tent or cabin
- Install, convert or service fuel-burning appliances without proper knowledge, skill and expertise
  - Use a gas cooker for heating a room
- Operate unvented gas burning appliances using paraffin or natural gas in closed rooms
  - Operate petrol-powered engines indoors or in confined areas
    - Barbecue indoors, or in an attached garage
    - Ignore a safety device when it shuts an appliance off

Always:

- Buy appliances accepted by a recognised testing laboratory
- Install appliances according to the manufacturer's instructions
- Have appliance installations carried out by professionals (for gas appliances engineers should be registered on the Gas Safe register)
- Have your appliances checked regularly by a qualified service engineer
  - Have your chimneys and flues cleaned professionally every year
  - Make regular visual inspections of all fuel-burning appliances
  - Open windows when a fireplace or oil/solid fuel cooker is in use

**EDUCATE YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY ON THE SOURCES AND SYMPTOMS OF CO POISONING AND HOW TO USE YOUR CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR**