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In this issue of check up:

- **Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**
- **Other Potential Poisons in Your Home**



Some of the most dangerous poisons found in the home are common, otherwise safe, everyday products.

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Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Each year, more than 400 Americans die from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning.

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide, or CO, is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause sudden illness and death.

Where is CO found?

CO is found in combustion fumes, such as those produced by cars and trucks, small gasoline engines, stoves, lanterns, burning charcoal and wood, cigarette smoke, gas ranges, and heating systems. CO from these sources can build up in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces. People and animals in these spaces can be poisoned by breathing it.

What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?

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

High levels of CO inhalation can cause loss of consciousness and death.

Who is at risk from CO poisoning?

All people and animals are at risk for CO poisoning. Unborn babies, infants, and people with chronic heart disease, anemia, or respiratory problems are more susceptible to its effects.

How can I prevent CO poisoning from my home appliances?

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 don't have a flame, they burn gas and can cause CO to build up inside your home, cabin, or camper.

If you smell an odor 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 could also be giving off CO.

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 CO detector in your home and check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall.



How can I heat my house safely or cook when the power is out?

- Never use a gas range or oven for heating. Using a gas range or oven for heating can cause a build up of CO inside your home, cabin, or camper.
- Never use a charcoal grill or a barbecue grill indoors. Using a grill indoors will cause a build up of CO inside your home, cabin, or camper unless you use it inside a vented fireplace.
- Never burn charcoal indoors.
- Never use a portable gas camp stove indoors. Using a gas camp stove indoors can cause CO to build up inside your home, cabin, or camper.
- Never use a generator inside your home, basement, or garage or near a window, door, or vent.

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Do not use portable flameless chemical heaters (catalytic) indoors. Although these heaters don't have a flame, they burn gas and can cause CO to build up inside your home, cabin, or camper.

How can I avoid CO poisoning from my vehicle?

- Have a mechanic check the exhaust system of my car every year. A small leak in your car's exhaust system can lead to a build up of CO inside the car.
- Never run a car or truck in the garage with the garage door shut. CO can build up quickly while your car or truck is running in a closed garage. Never run your car or truck inside a garage that is attached to a house and always open the door to any garage to let in fresh air when running a car or truck inside the garage.

- If you drive a vehicle with a tailgate, when you open the tailgate, you also need to open vents or windows to make sure air is moving through your car. If only the tailgate is open CO from the exhaust will be pulled into the car.

CO Detectors

Carbon Monoxide Detectors are widely available in stores and you may want to consider buying one as a back-up, but not as a replacement for proper use and maintenance of your fuel-burning appliances. However, it is important for you to know that the technology of CO detectors is still developing, that there are several types on the market, and that they are not generally considered to be as reliable as the



Carbon monoxide, or CO, is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause sudden illness and death.

Other Potential Poisons in Your Home

Individuals can be exposed to poisons in many ways. Some of the most dangerous poisons found in the home are common, otherwise safe, everyday products. Possible poisons can come from various products around the home and are usually found in the following forms:

- Solids: pills, vitamins, plants, powders, fertilizers, pellets, batteries, and mothballs
- Liquids: medicines, lotions, soaps, furniture polish, lighter fluid, household cleaners, antifreeze, pesticides, and cosmetics
- Hydrocarbons: lighter fluid, lamp oil, and nail polish remover
- Sprays: insecticides sprays and spray paints
- Invisible vapors: car exhaust fumes, gasoline fumes, carbon monoxide, and paint stripper

What to Do When a Poisoning Occurs

- Stay calm
- Call the poison control center in your area. In the U.S., the National Poison Control Center is 1-800-222-1222. Be ready to provide the following about the ingestion:
 - 1) The name of the product
 - 2) The amount of the product
 - 3) The time
 - 4) The age and weight of the person
 - 5) Your name and telephone number



Special Tips for Homes with Very Young Children

- Keep the telephone number of the local poison control center close and readily accessible. The National Poison Control Center phone number in the U.S. is 1-800-222-1222
- Keep shampoos, conditioners, mouthwash, and soaps that are in the bathroom out of the reach of children
- Be aware that the deodorant disk used in many diaper pails can be very poisonous if ingested. If a diaper pail is used in the home, the lid should fit tightly to prevent accidental ingestion of the disk
- Keep electrical appliances unplugged and out of reach of children
- Do not leave a young child alone in order to answer the telephone or doorbell while using a potentially poisonous product. Unsupervised children are more likely to ingest a potentially poisonous product
- Teach children about poisonous substances and the dangers and consequences of ingesting poisonous substances
- Make sure medications are kept in child-resistant containers. Keep medications out of the reach of children. Remember that the term child-resistant does not necessarily mean childproof.



References

<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/cofshst.html#A%20Few%20Words%20About%20CO%20Detectors>
<http://www.cdc.gov/co/faqs.htm>



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