

**MISSOURI**

**POISON CENTER**

**1-800-222-1222**

A Program of SSM Health Cardinal Glennon

**CARBON MONOXIDE:**

**THE SILENT KILLER**



**CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING CAN BE PREVENTED BY USING A CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR IN YOUR HOME. FIND CARBON MONOXIDE BEFORE IT FINDS YOU.**

## **SILENT LIKE A THIEF**

If you could prevent a thief from sneaking into your home, you'd do it, wouldn't you? Well, there is a thief that can silently show up and steal your health and life, and you can prevent it. The silent thief is carbon monoxide (CO). It has no odor, no color, no taste, is non-irritating, and it's invisible. It gives no warning of its presence until animals and people get sick from it. Thousands of people find this silent thief in their home, car, or workplace every year. For some people, it costs them their lives.



## WHAT SYMPTOMS DOES CO EXPOSURE CAUSE?

In the early stages, the illness that follows CO exposure looks a lot like the flu with headache, dizziness, upset stomach, tired or overall sick feeling.

More significant poisoning symptoms also can include:

- A throbbing headache
- Drowsiness
- Confusion
- Heart irregularities

Children and pets can get sick from CO while the adults still feel fine.

Severe poisonings can cause convulsions, unconsciousness, brain damage, and even death. CO poisoning usually occurs slowly over a period of several hours, however, at very high concentration, CO can kill in minutes.



## WHERE DOES CO COME FROM?

If you are using something that runs on batteries or electricity, there is no risk of CO. Carbon monoxide is a risk when fuel is burning to make heat or to power a tool, but the fuel is not burning cleanly with lots of fresh air and good ventilation. Things that burn gasoline, natural gas, propane, kerosene, coal, wood, charcoal, tobacco and the like can make CO. For example, a car, furnace, fireplace, hot water heater, portable space heater, stove, engine powered tool, or charcoal grill can become a source of CO.

If the equipment is operating properly and there is good ventilation, there will not be a problem. For example, there is no problem with barbecuing on a charcoal grill outside because any CO that is made floats away to nothing in the open air. But bring that same charcoal grill inside the house, and the carbon monoxide can collect to dangerous levels. Likewise, a regular motor vehicle is fine outside on the road. But if it runs for a long time in a garage with the door closed, a harmful level of CO can collect.

Carbon monoxide exposures become more frequent during cold weather because more people are burning fuel to make heat or energy.

## HOW CAN I PROTECT MY FAMILY FROM CO?

1. If you think CO is in your home - round up everyone, including pets - move them outside to fresh air immediately.
2. Install a carbon monoxide detector on each floor near bedrooms.
3. Always believe your alarm and act right away. Once outside call the poison center to determine what treatment needs to be done for you and your family.
4. All fuel burning appliances, furnaces, and fireplaces need to be checked by a professional at least once a year.
5. If you use a fireplace or wood stove, make sure the flue is open and properly vented.
6. Never use a charcoal grill or a gas powered generator indoors.
7. Don't run any gas powered equipment inside your home or garage.
8. Never leave a running vehicle in an enclosed area.



## IN THE EVENT OF A POISONING OR OVERDOSE

CALL THE MISSOURI POISON CENTER AT 1-800-222-1222. A SPECIALLY TRAINED NURSE OR PHARMACIST WILL ANSWER YOUR CALL 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [WWW.MISSOURIPOISONCENTER.ORG](http://WWW.MISSOURIPOISONCENTER.ORG)

POISON CENTER HELP IS FREE, EXPERT  
AND CONFIDENTIAL. WE HELP PEOPLE OF  
ALL AGES IN ALL TYPES OF SITUATIONS.



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**POISON HELP**  
IS A CALL AWAY.

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7980 Clayton Road, Suite 200 | St. Louis, Missouri 63117

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