

# Carbon Monoxide

## Is The “ Silent Killer” Lurking In Your Home?

Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning occurs when an internal combustion engine or improperly adjusted fuel-burning appliance is operated in a closed area without fresh air. When a generous supply of fresh air is available and fuel is burning properly there is little danger of CO poisoning.

### Recognize The Signs Of Danger

The early stages of CO exposure includes headaches, dizziness, and drowsiness. A conscious victim may look or act intoxicated. Other symptoms include blurred vision, irritability, and an inability to concentrate. Severe cases cause nausea and vomiting, shortness of breath, convulsions, unconsciousness, and eventually death. Considering these symptoms, it is easy to see how readily CO poisoning could strike a sleeping victim.

If the victim is unconscious, move him/her to an area with fresh air and place him/her on his/her side with his/her head resting on an arm. If the victim is not breathing, begin mouth to mouth resuscitation and CPR if necessary. Keep the victim warm and quiet; give nothing to eat or drink. Take a conscious victim immediately to the hospital, even if exposure was minimal and recovery appears complete.

## Home Heating Safety Checklist

- Read labels and follow all warning and lighting instructions. Do not operate if you are unsure.
- Keep clear space around heating equipment.
- If you smell a strong gas odor, turn off the pilot light, and do not operate electrical switches. Call the gas company from another location.
- Turn off heating equipment if you smell fumes, your eyes sting, or you become dizzy or nauseous while it is operating.
- Turn off heating if it has a fluttering or yellow flame.
- Do not use a space heater if the ceramic radiants are broken or out of place.
- Never store or use flammable liquids like gasoline, cleaning fluid or paint thinners near heating equipment.
- Never smoke while working with gas powered equipment.
- If your heating equipment has a pilot light and you have trouble keeping it lit or if the control valve is hard to operate, the heater may need servicing. Don't force it or tamper with it. Call the gas company to have it serviced.

## PROTECT YOURSELF

To protect against CO poisoning, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission offers these suggestions:

- All home fuel burning equipment should be inspected yearly by an expert to keep it operating efficiently and properly vented. Fuel burning heaters used to warm the house should be vented to the outside. If you must use an unvented heater, be sure to leave a window open at least one inch and turn off at night.
- Do not use a gas range or oven for heating a room. Never use a charcoal grill inside. Burning charcoal gives off large amounts of carbon monoxide. Never close a fireplace vent until the fire is completely extinguished.
- Internal combustion engines; such as automobiles, boats, lawnmowers, and generators produce lethal amounts of CO. Never run these engines in a closed or confined area; such as indoors, in a garage, or storage shed.
- Inspect chimneys, stove pipes, flues, and connectors to be sure they are clean and in good repair.
- To avoid CO poisoning from automobiles, have your muffler and tail pipes checked.

