



Oregon Poison Center

Serving Oregon and Guam

Mail code: CB550 | 3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Road | Portland, Oregon 97239-3098 |
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Información sobre intoxicaciones: 1-800-222-1222

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless, and tasteless gas that is produced whenever fossil fuel is burned. Gas-powered heating systems, propane, natural gas, wood, oil or coal-burning appliances produce carbon monoxide. This includes portable grills and camp stoves. Malfunctioning or improperly maintained chimneys, gas-powered heating systems, water heaters and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances can be a source of CO build-up and lead to CO poisoning. Indoor use of outdoor camp stoves or grills can also result in the accumulation of CO.

Winter weather, cold temperatures and power outages may cause people to seek alternative ways of heating their homes and cooking food that can put them at risk for CO poisoning. This includes the indoor use of camp stoves and portable generators or the use of portable generators too close to a dwelling.

Vehicle exhaust deposited in a garage or inside a vehicle due to a leak in the exhaust system can create a buildup of CO. Keyless-ignition vehicles inadvertently left running in a garage can be especially dangerous because CO from vehicle exhaust can flood a home, affecting those inside.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headache, dizziness, lightheadedness and feeling weak or nauseated. In serious cases, loss of consciousness or death may occur. Carbon monoxide can be life threatening, especially for children, the elderly or sick, but anyone is at risk of poisoning with exposure to high concentrations. Called the “silent killer,” carbon monoxide is invisible and odorless—those affected may not know they’ve been exposed before symptoms appear.

If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, move to a source of fresh air and call 1-800-222-1222 for poison help, or call 9-1-1.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is preventable. Follow these tips to reduce your risk of carbon monoxide exposure:

- Install a battery-operated or battery back-up CO detector on every level of your home. Check or replace the device's battery regularly to ensure detectors are working properly.
- Have your fireplace, heating system, water heater and any other gas, oil, or coal-burning appliance serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- Never use a charcoal grill, hibachi or portable camping stove inside a home, tent, car or camper.
- Portable generators should be used outdoors at least 25 feet away from a window, door or vent. Basements and garages are not safe locations to run a generator, even with doors and windows open.

- It is not safe to use a gas range or oven to heat a home.
- If you use a fireplace, make sure that your vents and flues are free of debris, especially if winds are high. Flying debris can block ventilation lines.
- Never leave the motor running in a vehicle parked in an enclosed or partially enclosed space, such as a garage.
- It is not safe to use a vehicle or motor home engine to heat a parked vehicle or camper if you are staying in it overnight.
- Make sure your vehicle's tailpipe is completely clear of snow and debris before turning on your vehicle to prevent CO accumulation inside your car.
- After parking a keyless vehicle, double-check that the engine is turned off before closing the garage door and entering the home. Check with your vehicle's manufacturer about any additional warning signals and safety features.
- For more information visit www.cdc.gov/co

If you or a loved one is experiencing a poison emergency, call the Oregon Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. A trained health care provider is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The call is free and confidential. Poison prevention education and other poison safety resources are available at <https://www.ohsu.edu/oregon-poison-center>.

Accredited by the American Association of Poison Control Centers, the Oregon Poison Center is a designated regional poison control center for Oregon and Guam.