

Carbon monoxide is colourless and odourless so most people have no idea they are being exposed to it. It is a bigger problem these days as newer homes are built air-tight and super-insulated; they don't have the air flow of older homes that allowed air leakage.

How Does Carbon Monoxide Kill?

When you breathe in carbon monoxide, the gas binds itself to the hemoglobin in your blood. Once the attachment happens, your blood loses the ability to transport oxygen and you suffocate; essentially you suffer from oxygen starvation. It is especially dangerous when you are sleeping, as you aren't conscious to recognize the symptoms.

Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- **Mild exposure** – Runny nose, headache, sore eyes, fatigue, irritability, mild exertion, and shortness of breath.
- **Medium exposure** – Disoriented, confused, difficulty thinking, drowsy, dizzy, vomiting, chest pains, and loss of eyesight.
- **High exposure** – Unconsciousness, difficulty breathing, brain damage, coma, death.

Carbon monoxide poisoning can feel a lot like the flu or seasickness in its initial stage. As with most health issues, symptoms vary from person to person.

Even slight exposure to CO has negative effects on your body and can have serious long-term health effects.

0-2 parts per million (PPM) – typical level in a Canadian home

25 PPM – maximum allowable safe amount for an adult

70+ PPM – symptoms become noticeable for most people

200 PPM – headache and fatigued after a few hours

400 PPM – severe headache after a few hours

800 PPM – dizzy and convulsing within an hour

1,600 PPM – nausea within 20 minutes, death within two hours

2,000 PPM – you lose consciousness quickly

3,000 PPM – dizzy after 5 minutes, dead after 30 minutes

13,000 PPM – death after a couple minutes

What Causes Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon monoxide is a gas that is created when you burn fossil fuels such as natural gas, oil, gasoline, kerosene, wood, charcoal, etc.

The most common things that expose people to CO in their home are:

- cars
- gas appliances
- cook top vent
- wood stoves
- fireplaces

- chimney
- kerosene lamps
- water heaters
- heating equipment
- heat exchanger
- gas powered tools
- lawn mower and other gas powered yard equipment
- barbecues and space heaters meant for outdoor use but are inside
- barbecues and gas powered items being used in the garage
- cigarettes in enclosed areas

Humans can't see, smell, or taste carbon monoxide.

