



# Topic: Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

*Carbon monoxide can kill quickly. Every year hundreds of North Americans die from carbon monoxide poisoning. It usually happens while they sleep.*

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, invisible gas. It binds to the hemoglobin in blood, which carries oxygen throughout the body. If you have a certain amount of it in your system, even if you're surrounded by oxygen, you will feel as though you are suffocating.



Neurologists at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston say a high-level exposure to carbon monoxide can kill almost immediately. Minimal exposure causes headaches, dizziness, nausea, and sleepiness, which appear within days after exposure.

A faulty heating system is usually the source of the carbon monoxide. There are many possible sources such as a furnace, kitchen stove, water heater, fireplace, generator, charcoal broiler, and anything that burns fossil fuels (gasoline, diesel fuel, wood and kerosene).

Low-cost carbon monoxide detectors can save lives. A battery-operated carbon monoxide alarm is highly effective in preventing carbon monoxide poisoning.

## Effects of Carbon Monoxide

Just how sick people get from CO exposure varies greatly from person to person, depending on age, overall health, and the concentration and length of exposure. Generally, however, here's how it affects people, according to the *National Safety Council*: (CO is measured in parts per million.)

**35 ppm** - No effects within 8 hours.

**200 ppm** - Mild headache after 2-3 hours.

**400 ppm** - Headache and nausea after 1-2 hours.

**800 ppm** - Headache, nausea, and dizziness after 45 minutes. Collapse after 2 hours.

**1000 ppm** - Unconsciousness, 1 hour.

**3200 ppm** - Headache, nausea and dizziness after 5-10 minutes; unconsciousness after 30 minutes.

**12,800 ppm** - Unconsciousness and danger of death after 1-3 minutes.