

# CARBON MONOXIDE (CO)

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## FACTS

- **Carbon Monoxide (CO)** is known as the silent killer because it is invisible – odorless, colorless and tasteless.
- CO is a **toxic gas** produced by the incomplete burning of fuels including oil, propane, coal, wood, natural gas, gasoline, diesel fuel, charcoal and kerosene. Faulty or inadequately vented appliances that use these fuels – such as furnaces, fireplaces, wood stoves, charcoal grills, kerosene heaters as well as gasoline-powered generators and vehicles – can produce deadly amounts of CO.
- Some warning signs of CO can include **stale/stuffy air, excessive moisture on windows and walls, and soot buildup** around appliance vents.
- **Symptoms of CO often mimic the “flu”** and include headaches, nausea, fatigue, dizziness, shortness of breath and stinging or burning of the eyes. Prolonged exposure can cause disorientation, convulsions, unconsciousness (coma) and eventually death.
- Infants, the elderly, people with respiratory problems and pets are especially susceptible to **CO poisoning**. When CO is breathed into the body, **carbon monoxide combines with the blood and prevents it from absorbing oxygen**.



## 8 SAFETY TIPS

1. **The best defense against carbon monoxide poisoning** is to install an audible carbon monoxide alarm that meets or exceeds Underwriters Laboratory standards and will alarm if dangerous levels of carbon monoxide are created.
2. **Inspect your furnace** annually and have it tuned up by a qualified service professional.
3. **Change furnace air filters** at least once every other month (more if pets are present) during the heating season.
4. **Never leave a supplemental heater or fireplace unattended.** Keep clothing, papers and other flammable items well away from gas appliances and supplemental heaters.
5. **Perform a visual inspection** of the chimney and vent pipes to make sure they are free of obstructions such as leaves and nests.
6. **When using generators, be sure they have been connected** by a licensed electrician and are only operated where there is adequate ventilation. Never use a generator in a basement, enclosed garage, breezeway, or near air intakes.
7. **Never leave snow blowers, power lawn equipment or generators running** in an enclosed area like a garage. Cars should also never be left running in a garage.
8. **Never use gas stoves or charcoal grills to heat a building.** These appliances can produce deadly amounts of carbon monoxide when used improperly.

For more information, visit [ConsumersEnergy.com/safety](https://www.consumersenergy.com/safety).